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BEHIND THE WHEEL OF A WAR AMBULANCE.

The Ambulance Squad Lined Up at Attention While One of the Drivers Was Decorated with the Croix de Guerre

BEHIND THE WHEEL
OF A
WAR AMBULANCE

BY
ROBERT WHITNEY IMBRIE.

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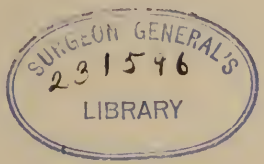

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TO THE MEN
In mud-grimed uniforms of horizon blue,

THE MEN
Who, at hand-grips with death, smile,

TO THE MEN
Who face and suffer agony that Freedom and Right
may not perish from the earth,

WHO
With nothing of hero in garb or pose,
Yet shelter a hero's soul,

TO THE MEN
I have carried,
A vous, mes vieux, je lève mon verre
and

TO YOU
I dedicate these lines.

Monastir, Serbia.
April 18, 1917.

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PREFACE.

Lest those who have read the bombastic accounts of American journals be misled, let it be stated: the men of the American Ambulance have not conducted the Great War nor been its sole participants. Nor would France have lapsed into desuetude but for their aid. They have but assisted in a useful work. So far from desiring to pose as heroes, none realize better than they how insignificant has been their part compared to the real hero of this war—the obscure soldier in the trench.

The Americans have received far more than they have given. No man can have served in this war with the French without having grown stronger through their courage, gentler through their courtesy, and nobler through their devotion. Yet the serving of the Republic of the Tri-color has not made us love less the Republic of the Stars and Stripes. Always it was of the States we thought when the chorus rose:

"Here's to the land that gave us birth,
Here's to the flag she flies,
Here's to her sons, the best of earth,
Here's to her smiling skies,"

thought, mayhap, some merry-eyed Parisienne *marraine* was visioned as the song continued:

Here's to the heart that beats for me,
True as the stars above,
Here's to the day when mine she'll be,
Here's to the girl I love.

As to the pages which follow, may it be offered in excuse for their egocentricity that they are in the nature of a journal based on personal experiences. And in apology for their crudity may it be advanced that they were written under abnormal and often uncomfortable conditions, sometimes humped up in an ambulance, wrapped in a blessé blanket, while outside the snow came down, sometimes in a dugout as the shells whistled overhead, sometimes in a "flea-bag" when it was necessary to lay down the pen frequently and blow on numbed fingers or, mayhap, at night, in a wind-swept barn, by the light of a guttering candle.

R. W. I.

Behind the Wheel of a War Ambulance.

CHAPTER I

THE CLUTCH IS THROWN IN

"YOU will," said the officer, "drive this ambulance to Rue Pinel and there report for your military number. Follow the convoy." Save for the fact that I did not catch the name of the *rue,* that the convoy was already out of sight, and that this was only the second time in my life I had ever driven a car of this type, the matter looked easy. So I saluted, said *"entendu,"* threw in the clutch and cast off.

Quite evidently the first thing to do was to overtake the convoy. I gave her gas; whirled around the corner on something less than the usual number of wheels and streaked through Neuilly in entire disregard of traffic regulations and the rights of pedestrians. It was a lawless start, but like many other acts *sui generis* it was successful, for at Porte Maillot, outside the ancient walls of Paris I came up with the other cars. Down towards the center of the City our course lay; out upon the Champs Elysées, across the

Place Concorde and then through a maze of narrow streets which the convoy leader seemed to choose because of the density of their traffic. The pace, I suppose, was reasonable, but to one who did not have a driving acquaintance with his car it seemed terrific. It had never before been forced upon my attention that the streets of Paris are largely populated with infirm and undecided old ladies and baby buggies. Once my engine stalled. Though I swarmed out of that car in a few seconds less than no time, the convoy was out of sight by the time the motor was cranked and I had regained the driving seat. The car had an electric hooter and with my finger on this I hit a pace which made the side streets look like windows in one continuous wall. Once a gendarme waved his arms, but I felt we could have little in common and I passed him so fast it seemed as though he were being jerked in the other direction. In the months to come I was to experience some tense and trying moments, but just then I felt that being under shell fire must seem a positive relaxation compared with what I was undergoing, or rather going through. At last I glimpsed the convoy, caught it and drove across the Seine, down the Boulevard St. Germain, through another tangle of streets, finally coming to a halt in front of a pile of gray dull-looking stone buildings, about which was a high stone wall. Presently a sentry, who stood in front of a gate in the wall, signaled us and we drove through into an enclosure lined with build-

ings. We were at Rue Pinel—headquarters for the Automobile Service of the Armies.

Every military car in use by the French from the largest camion to the smallest *voiture légère* must have its registered military number, painted on its hood, its body and on the stern and it was for this our cars had come to headquarters.

While my ambulance was thus receiving its official identity I had a chance to examine it. Of American make, the car had a small but amply efficient motor and standard chassis. Upon this chassis was mounted a long, box-like body which, extending some distance aft the rear axle gave the effect of a lengthened wheel base. On the starboard side, forward, were lashed four cans of reserve gas, a can of oil and one of kerosene. The corresponding position on the port side was taken up with a locker, in which were stored a complete set of field tools, extra tubes, pump, canvas bucket, and tinned emergency rations of biscuit and chocolate. In smaller lockers on either side of the driving seat, were stored other articles, such as spark-plugs, tire chalk, chains and a coil of rope, and affixed to one of these lockers was a small steel envelope in which were carried the "ship's papers"—in this case an *ordre de mouvement,* permit to enter and remain in the Army Zone and identification card, written in three languages, and authorization to commandeer gasoline. On the car's running board was strapped a tin containing reserve water. Access to the interior

was had by two swinging doors aft. Within there were two seats, each capable of holding two persons. These seats could be folded back against the sides, thus giving room for three stretchers, which when not in use were carried on the floor of the car and held in place by braces. The inside was furnished also with a lantern. The car was painted a "war gray" and on either side was a crimson cross. From the top another cross looked upward to greet the war planes. On the body, on either side, just above the wheel appeared the legend, AMERICAN AMBULANCE.

At that time, December, 1915, the American Ambulance, an off-spring of the American Hospital at Neuilly, maintained in the field four "Sections," besides one section in Paris for service in connection with the hospital. These field sections, besides auxiliary cars, consisted of twenty ambulances of a uniform type, the gifts of Americans, and were driven by volunteer Americans serving without compensation and furnishing their own equipment and uniforms of a pattern prescribed by regulations. Each Section was commanded by a French officer, under whom was an American Section Chief. The status of these drivers at this time was not clearly defined. Later the whole Service was militarized and we became members of the French Army. Prior to this we certainly were not French soldiers, for we wore none of the army's insignia. Neither were we *civiles* for we were

subject to military discipline and served within the Zone of the Armies. I suppose we might best have been described by the term "almost privates."

It was to one of these Field Sections, Section 1, or to give it its military designation S. S. U. I., Convois Automobiles, that I was now bound. Section 1 is the oldest foreign Section—*Section étranger*—attached to the Armies. It had its origin in September 1914, when a number of cars, donated and manned by Americans, served in the Marne campaign. Though not then organized as a Section, it subsequently became so and in January 1915, went to the front, a fully organized, self-containing unit. Already it had an enviable record. It had served on the Yser and at Ypres, in the bombardment of Dunkirk and had received the attention and commendation of those high in command. It had the reputation of never having failed and of never quitting.

It was close to mid-day when the cars had received the numbering and had been registered. There was only one other car destined for Section 1. And this was driven by "Freddie," an Oxford Rhodesman. The other cars of the morning's convoy were either for the remaining field Sections or for the Paris Service. The numbering was barely completed before we were joined by an officer, a Lieutenant, an affable chap who spoke excellent English and who informed us that he was to act as our guide to the City of Beauvais, where we would join our Section. As he was ready, we

started at once and again drove across Paris. Before reaching the City gate we drew up in front of a Duval and had luncheon—last meal for some months to come that Freddie and I should eat from a white table cloth. Then with cigars lighted—hereafter we should smoke pipes—we cranked up and got under way. At the city gate a sentry challenged but the officer leaning out, spoke the magic word "Ambulance" and we passed. Gradually the houses grew less imposing and more scattered. Farther on we crossed the traffic-burdened Seine. Open spaces, surrounded by walls appeared; the smooth streets gave way to cobbles and we left Paris behind. Along roads lined with tall graceful poplars we spun. Occasionally through an arched gate-way we could catch glimpses of a winding, tree-lined drive leading up to some stately château, the windows of which were generally shuttered.

Now and then we would pass through a small, somnolent village. The absence of traffic was noticeable; a high wheeled market cart, a wagon piled with faggots and drawn by a sad-faced donkey, perhaps an ancient gig. These were all, save when once or twice a high-powered car, showing staff colors flashed by. Once we met a convoy of camions. The roads, while not as perfect as one finds in peace times, were, on the whole, good. Several times we passed groups of middle-aged men—territorials—clad in blue, before-the-war red trousers and *kepi* and blue tunic, hard at

work breaking rocks and repairing the surface.

As the afternoon wore on, the mist which had all day hung low over the hills, thickened and rain set in. The short winter's day was well spent when we reached a good sized town. A sentry challenged, but after inspecting our *ordre de mouvement,* saluted and permitted us to proceed. The road was now entirely deserted. The lights streaming ahead showed only the red cross on the back of Freddie's car. And so we drifted through the night. Finally *"Qui vive"* rang out of the gloom and we drew up at another sentry post. "This is Beauvais," the officer remarked. We made our way through some ill-lighted streets, stopping every now and then to inquire the direction to the barracks, and at last reached a large, open space in which were parked many motors of various types. Along one side of this park our lights flashed on a row of ambulances. We had reached our Section.

We had barely shut off our engines when a figure appeared through the gloom. It proved to be "the chief," the American Sous-Commander of the Squad. He bade us welcome and informed us that we would be quartered for the night in the barracks opposite. So, having aligned our cars with the others, we shouldered our "flea-bags," as sleeping sacks are known in the army, and stumbled across a muddy road and pitch dark parade ground, up a twisting flight of stairs and into a long room, faintly illuminated by a single lantern. Upon the plank floor was scattered a

quantity of straw bedding. We were pretty well fagged, having been up since day-break, and after some bread and chocolate in the canteen below, were glad to crawl into our bags. From somewhere came the tramp, tramp of a sentry. The monotony of his footfalls lulled us. Then, distantly through the night sounded *"le repos"* and we dozed. My first day in the Service was over.

CHAPTER II

BACK OF THE FRONT

LÉ REVEILLÉ roused us out next morning and after coffee and rolls at a nearby café, the cars were put in motion and the convoy wound out in a long gray line. We had not far to go, for beyond the outskirts of Beauvais we came to a halt. Ahead, a winding muddy road pushed its way up a hill, upon the top of which, like a sentinel, stood a crumbling, hoary church. About, were a number of two-storied houses with wall-surrounded gardens, a few modest cafés. Such is the village of Maracel and here we were destined to spend the next few weeks.

Immediately on arrival, everyone in the Squad had shouted, "Is this Moscow? Moscow, is this Moscow?" This ritual, which it seemed was invariably gone through on reaching any new place, had its origin no one knew where, but somewhere back in the remote past of the Section. This inquiry was immediately followed by a "gathering of the brethren" and the rolling chorus of "She wore it for a lover who was far, far away" was sung with fanatical fervency. This also was a fixed custom and as long as I remained

a member of the Section, I never knew the Squad to arrive in any new place without this solemn program's being religiously adhered to. These matters having been accomplished—as Cæsar would express it—the Squad would be ready for anything.

A deserted, one-room schoolhouse, not far from the church, was assigned to us for sleeping quarters, and the large room of the café was commandeered for our mess, the cook installing his galley in a small hut in the rear. The cars, for the moment, were allowed to remain lined up by the side of the road.

It was now for the first time I had the opportunity to mix with and judge of my fellow squad members. At the outbreak of the war the restless ones of the earth flocked to France, drawn there by prospect of adventure and a desire to sit in the game. The Ambulance attracted its share of these characters and a stranger, more incongruous *mélange,* I dare say, was never assembled. There was an ex-cowboy from Buffalo Bill's Congress of Rough Riders, big game hunters,—one of the most famous in the world was at one time on Section 1's roster—a former 4th Cavalryman, a professional Portuguese revolutionist, a driver of racing cars, a Legionary who had fought in Senegal, an all-American football center, two professional jockeys, one of whom had carried the Kaiser's colors, an Alaskan sweep-stakes dog driver, Rhodesmen, Yale, Harvard, and Princeton men, a prospector from New Mexico, the author of a "best

seller"—you would recognize his name in an instant if I were to give it—a New York undertaker, a Harvard professor of dead languages, a Maine lumberjack; a hardy, reckless, restless crowd,—they faced life carelessly and death indifferently. Many of these men I had met in Paris before coming to the field and involuntarily they had called to mind Service's lines:

"We have failed where slummy cities overflow,
But the stranger ways of earth
Know our pride and know our worth
And we go into the dark, as fighters go.
Yet we're hard as cats to kill
And our hearts are reckless still
And we've danced with death a dozen times or so."

As the war went on these "characters" grew less in the ranks of the Ambulance, as the tendency became to recruit the Corps almost wholly from college men who became typal. But when I joined Section 1, it still had some interesting specimens, and though even at that time five colleges were represented in the Squad there was no snobbery and the work was done with a democratic *esprit* which spoke well for its Americanism.

It was on the 24th of December that we reached Maracel. "All hands and the cook" at once turned to and began transforming our mess quarters into something of a Christmas aspect. A nearby wood

yielded plenty of greens and splendid bunches of mistletoe. Alas, that the third element which goes to make mistletoe the most attractive of plants should have been lacking. By evening the shabby little room had assumed a festive appearance. The place already boasted of—it really should have apologized for—a decrepit billiard table with three almost round balls —rounder at least than the average potato. From somewhere a venerable piano was dragged forth from a well-deserved seclusion and though it had a number of "sour" notes and when pressed too hard was inclined to quit altogether, all things considered, it did nobly. By the time those things were accomplished and evening mess over we were "ready for the hay," though in this case it was straw.

Christmas came in with fog and smatterings of rain, weather typical of what the next six weeks would produce. In the "big car" a dozen or so of us went into Beauvais for church, greeting everyone we met en route with *"bon noël."* The church was cold, the service of course entirely in French. Therefore, we were glad when it was over, but also rather glad we had gone. Noon mess was a meager affair as most of the food was for the evening "burst." The cars which Freddie and I had brought up from Paris had been stocked with good things and when we sat down down that night it was to turkey with cranberry sauce and, thanks to the thoughtful kindness of an American woman, there was even mince pie.

It was at this dinner that I met for the first time our Commanding Officer, the C. O., or as he was generally known "the Lieut." A well-assembled, handsome man who spoke English perfectly, having lived for some years in the States, he had a merry eye and a reckless nerve which gave his men confidence, for they always knew that, however exposed a *poste* might be, the "Lieut." would be there. He was a man to whom danger was a tonic, an ideal leader for a volunteer unit such as ours. Afterwards in the tense days the Squad experienced at Verdun it was his smilingly imperturbable front which helped us through. On the side of the Boers, he had fought through the South African War, purely from love of adventure, and had the distinction of having had a thousand pound reward offered for him by the British. In one of the few speeches I ever heard him make, Lieutenant de Kersauson that night outlined our probable future program. The section which had been on active service in the field for nearly a year, had been sent back of the line to Beauvais, where there was a motor *parc,* for the general overhauling and repair of the cars. He hoped, the Lieutenant stated, that we should be in Beauvais no longer than a fortnight by which time the cars should be in shape and he promised us that then we should "see action."

The day following Christmas we received word that Dick Hall of Section III had been killed by shell fire on Christmas eve, news which had a sobering in-

fluence upon us all and brought a more intimate realization of the conditions we should face.

Now commenced the work for which the Section has been sent to Beauvais. Twelve of the cars were driven to the army automobile *parc*, there to undergo renovation; the remaining eight were placed in a walled yard near quarters, where was established our *atelier*. These eight cars were to be repaired by ourselves and we at once got to work on them. It was here I first made the acquaintance of "Old Number Nine," the car assigned to me and which I was destined to command for the next five months. She was the gift of Mr. Cleveland H. Dodge of New York City, and had already seen eight months service at the front. Caked all over with an inch thick coat of mud, with battered hood and dilapidated lockers and guards, certainly she was not a "thing of beauty" and, after listening to the gasp and grunts which issued from her protesting motor, I had serious doubt as to her ever being a "joy forever." There was about "Old Number Nine," however, an air of rakish *abandon* and dogged *nonchalance* that gave promise of latent powers, a promise she well fulfilled in the months to come.

It is difficult for one who had not led the life to appreciate just what his car means to the *ambulancier*. For periods of weeks, mayhap, it is his only home. He drives it through rain, hail, mud and dust, at high noon on sunshiny days, and through nights so

dark that the radiator cap before him is invisible. Its interior serves him as a bedroom. Its engine furnishes him with hot shaving water, its guards act as a dresser. He works over, under and upon it. He paints it and oils it and knows its every bolt and nut, its every whim and fancy. When shrapnel and shell *éclat* fall, he dives under it for protection. Not only his own life, but the lives of the helpless wounded entrusted to his care depend on its smooth and efficient functioning. Small wonder then that his car is his pride. You may reflect on an *ambulancier's* mechanical knowledge, his appearance, morals, religion, or politics, but if you be wise, reflect not on his car. To him, regardless of its vintage or imperfections, it is not only a good car, it is the *best* car. No millionaire in his $10,000 limousine feels half the complacent pride of the ambulance driver when, perhaps after days of travel, he has at last succeeded in inducing it to "hit on four" and with its wobbly wheel clutched in sympathetic hands he proudly steers its erratic course.

I had "Old Number Nine's" engine down, ground her valves, decarbonized her motor, put in new bushings, replaced a spring leaf, and inspected and tightened every bolt and nut. Lastly I scraped, painted, and re-lettered her. A carpenter fitted new lockers and she was also supplied with a new canvas windshield.

Permission had been granted us to secure individual quarters within the village limits of Maracel.

Freddie and I interviewed a garrulous old dame and after considerable negotiation and expenditure of countless *"Mon Dieux"* and *"alors"* succeeded in renting from her a one-room stone cottage down the road from the mess. That cottage was undoubtedly the coldest, clammiest place which ever served as headquarters for pneumonia and rheumatism. It had a stone floor and possessed "a breath," which want of ventilation rendered permanent. We conceived that having originally been designed for a tomb it had been found too damp and relegated to other uses. After three days we gave it up, preferring a less horrible death, and sought other "digs." George, with whom I had crossed and who had been delayed in Paris, had now joined the Squad and the three of us combined to rent a palatial suite of one room farther up the street. This room was on the second floor and hence dryer. Also it possessed what the landlady fondly regarded as a stove. At all events it looked as much like a stove as it did anything else. By dint of much stoking and blowing, this instrument at times could be induced to assume an almost feverish state and exude a small degree of warmth. Our new quarters possessed a table and three chairs so that altogether we were *"bien installé."* There was one drawback, however, and that was the children. We were prepared to concede that a reasonable number of children—say thirty or forty—were alright about a house, but when they oozed out of every corner, popped

from beneath beds, dropped over the transom, emerged from clothes-closets, got themselves fallen over and tramped upon, and appeared in all shapes, conditions and sizes, in every conceivable and inconceivable place, they got upon our nerves. We used to wonder, if by any chance, we had engaged quarters in an orphan asylum.

In the afternoon, we used to stroll into Beauvais. We found it a quaint old place of about thirty thousand inhabitants. Like so many of the French provincial towns it was built around a central *place*. It had a number of very interesting wooden houses, curiously carved and dating back to the Tenth Century. Its most prominent structure is its incompleted cathedral, a building of some architectural pretensions, but owing its chief interest to the fact that it contains the world's most wonderful clock. Standing forty or more feet in height, this clock has the proportions of a small house. Countless dials give the time of the world's principal cities, record the astronomical and weather conditions, and on the hour various horns are blown, figures move, a cock crows and the Angel of the Lord appears and with extended arms drives Satan into the flames of hell. If the sea at Havre is rough, a small boat is violently agitated on undulating waves. If the sea is calm the boat remains motionless. The seconds, the minutes, the hours, the days, the years and the centuries are shown and the machinery which operates all this needs winding but once

in three hundred years—surely an ideal occupation for a lazy man.

If for no other reason, we shall always remember Beauvais for its *pâtisseries*. Scattered all over the town they are, showing in their windows row on row of delicious, tempting *gateaux*. Cakes with cream filling, cakes with chocolate icing, cakes square, oblong and round, cakes diamond shape, tarts of cherry, apple and custard, *éclairs,* both long and round, chocolate and coffee. And how we used to "stuff" them. In the months to follow, and many times in the long Balkan winter, how often did we think of and long for those pastries. Also there was a little restaurant which will long flourish in our memory. It was not a pretentious place, not even on the *place,* but down a side street half-hidden by a projecting building. There, when we were tired of army food, we were wont to foregather, and there, served by a little waitress who was in a perpetual state of giggles, evidently considering us the funniest things in the world, we used to consume the flakiest of *omlettes aux rognons,* crisp *pommes de terre frites,* tender *salades,* delicious *fricandeau de veau* and *fromages* and other delicacies the mere thinking of which makes my mouth water.

Saturday was market day and the usually somnolent *place* would then waken into life. Booths sprang up and the country people flocking in from round about would offer their produce. Rows of stolid

looking cheeses were lined up like so many corpses awaiting identification. Cabbages, cauliflowers and apples were everywhere piled in heaps. The hot chestnut vendor called his wares and the ubiquitous faker harangued his credulous audience. The hum of voices in barter filled the air. And everywhere was the soldier, either back of the line *en repos,* or passing through from one sector of the front to another. Clad in his uniform of horizon-blue, topped with his steel casque, he strolled about singly or in groups and here it was I first mixed with the *poilu* and found him that rough, cheery philosopher whose kindly *bonhomie* makes him the most lovable of comrades. At Beauvais too I saw my first *"soizante-quinze,"* that most famous of all field guns and within range of whose spiteful voice I was destined to spend many days.

Meanwhile the old year slipped out and the mellow tones of the church clock announced the coming of 1916. Surely this year would bring victory.

On the eleventh of January, "Old Number Nine," having undergone several major and many minor operations, was re-assembled. I cranked her up—and she ran. What's more she ran smoothly. From that day she was my pride.

Though life in Maracel was pleasant enough, the Squad was becoming restive and the Commander was continually besought for information as to when we were going to the front. To which query he always

made evasive response, since he himself was no better informed than we. By the middle of the month the cars were back from the *parc* and everything was in readiness. Still no word came. And then at last one morning we received our orders. I remember I was employed in putting some delicate touches on "Old Number Nine" when the word came. We were to be in convoy at two o'clock that afternoon. It was then eleven. The cars were to be loaded with the section impedimenta. Our personal kits were to be packed and stowed; oil, gas and water were to be put aboard and dozens of other details attended to. "Ah, then there was a hurrying to and fro in hot haste." But it was accomplished and as the church clock boomed the hour we were lined up in convoy waiting the starting whistle—and we knew not what.

CHAPTER III

OFF TO THE FRONT

IT was night when we crossed a wooden bridge spanning the Oise, and halted the convoy in the muddy streets of a small town, Pont Ste. Maxence. We were tired, cold and hungry and time hung heavily while we waited in the common room of a small hostel for the *patron* and his staff to prepare a meal. This over, the convoy recrossed the river and parked in an open space beside the road. Then, with our blanket rolls on our shoulders, we made our way up the road to a barn where we were glad enough to kick off our boots and puttees and turn in on the hay. We slept well, though I remember once in the night as I sought a more comfortable position, I heard a rumble and wondered vaguely whether rain would follow the thunder and if the roof would leak. But in the morning when we turned out to perform our simple toilet at the barnyard pump, "the thunder" still continued and then it was I realized its meaning; it was the voices of the guns we heard.

That day we worked rather steadily on our cars, installing tire racks and making some adjustments

which our hurried departure from Beauvais had interrupted. As we worked, troops and transport convoys were continually passing along the road, and the clanking of arms and the rumbling of artillery wheels made us feel we were nearing the front.

In the afternoon we sauntered into the town. In the wrecked bridge which had here spanned the Oise I saw my first evidence of war's destruction. Built in 1744, after nearly a century and a half of service, it had been blown up by the retreating French to delay the German advance in the early days of the war. Now its once graceful arches were but shattered masses of stone. Pont Ste. Maxence proved to be anything but prepossessing. Indeed I can recall few towns less attractive. With its narrow, dirty streets, its ugly houses and poor shops, all made dolorous by a falling rain, it offered little of cheer. However, Freddie, George and I found a cozy little inn whose warm, snug, *buvette* looked out over the river, and here we made a famous dinner.

Since our cars were parked in an exposed place it was considered necessary to stand watch over them and that night I had my first experience of guard duty, my watch being from one to three in the morning. Though the rain was falling gently, a full moon, swept fitfully by clouds, made the night one of silvery beauty. Now and again, from far away, came the rumble of the guns; before long I knew I should be out there from whence came that rumble and I specu-

lated on just what my sensations would be and wondered whether my nerve would hold when confronted with the conditions I had come to seek.

We had hoped to linger not more than a day at Pont Ste. Maxence, but it was not until late afternoon of the third day that orders came in directing the Section to move on the following morning. And so when we turned in that night it was with a feeling of eagerness, for tomorrow would see us en route for the front.

The first light had hardly grayed our loft before the blare of bugles and the "slog, slog" of hobbed shoes told us of the passing of a column. *Petit déjeuner* over, our blankets rolled and stowed, we drew our cars up by the side of the road to await the passing of that column. Eighteen months in the army have shown me no finer spectacle than we saw that morning. For here passing before us were the Tirailleurs d' Afrique, men recruited from the Tell and Morocco, the most picturesque soldiery in the world. Rank after rank they passed with a swinging steady cadence, platoon after platoon, company after company, regiment after regiment. Twelve thousand strong they marched. At the head of each company, flung to the breeze, was the yellow flag, bearing the hand and crescent of the Prophet, for these men are Mohammedans. At the head of each regiment marched a band, half a hundred strong, bands which surely played the most weird strains that ever stirred

men's souls or quickened laggard feet. Bugles, drums and the plaintive hautboy, blared, thumped and wailed in tingling rhythm. Complete in every detail they passed, with all the *apparatus belli,* machine gun platoons, goulash batteries, pack trains, munition transports, every button and buckle in place, every rope taut, an ensemble of picturesque fighting efficiency. And the faces!—the dark, swarthy faces of the Arab, the Moor and the Moroccan, faces seamed with the lines implanted by the African sun and the gazing over desert wastes. There was no type. Each man was individual. But one thing they had in common. In all the world there is but one lure that could unite and hold such men—for they are all volunteers —that lure, the primal love of strife. That love was stamped upon their very souls, showed itself in their carriage, their stride, and in their hawk-like gaze. We looked, and felt that verily these were men. And they had fought, fought in the lands of strange names. On many a tunic flashed forth the medals of hard fought campaigns, the *Etoile d' Afrique,* the *Médaille Militaire,* the *Croix de Guerre,* the Moroccan, the Indo-China Medal; all were there, and sometimes one single tunic bore them all.

In all that long column, one man there was we shall not forget. A captain, he strode at the head of his company. At least six feet four he must have been. Clad in the earthy brown of the African troops, his harness and trappings were of finest pigskin. Around his

middle was wound a flaming crimson sash. From beneath his *kepi* worn at a jaunty angle, peeped out a mane of tawny yellow hair, conspicuous against his sun-tanned skin. He fairly scintillated like a burnished blade held aloft by a brave hand. And when, in answer to our salute, he stiffened into "regulation" like a page out of the tactics manual, we felt it would be a privilege to follow such a man in hopeless charge

It was ten-thirty when the last transport had passed. The last gun clinked by. The column had been four and one-half hours in passing.

Now, with the bridge at last free, we crossed and, after skirting the river some distance, entered a forest. Emerging from this we came to another river, the Aisne—and nosed our way over a pontoon bridge. On the farther side we pushed up a rise and, turning sharply to our left, found ourselves in what had been a street, now but a way through a scattered waste of wrecked buildings, once the village of Choisy au Bac. The ruins had a singularly hoary look, as if it had been ages since this desolation had descended. Here and there stood the walls of a house, its windows blown away, sightless to the ruins about. Through the despairing streets we steered our course, and passing between two imposing stone pillars, entered the court yard of a once beautiful château. Of the structure there now remains but one room. It might have been the breakfast room—save that in France there is no breakfast—large, well-lighted and furnished with

dainty bird's-eye chairs and a spindle-legged table which, in the midst of all this ruin seemed strangely incongruous. The remainder of the mansion was a fire-blackened ruin, destroyed, like the town, by the Germans when they had retreated.

Choisy was much nearer the line than we had yet been—I think not above five or six kilometers away—and from the courtyard we could hear occasionally the "putt, putt, putt," of a machine-gun, while just outside the wall ran a reserve trench.

While we were eating luncheon, an al fresco affair served on ambulance seats, stretched between mudguards, the C. O. had been searching for a cantonment. About three, he returned and with considerable complacency informed us that he had succeeded in having a beautiful château assigned us. Château life held strong appeal, so the Lieut. was lustily applauded and a few minutes later, the order having been given, the machines strung out along the road. Less than an hour later we "raised" our quarters, and a magnificent looking place it was. A modern structure of perhaps fifty rooms, the château stood in the midst of its own beautiful park at the foot of which passed the tranquil Aisne. In general appearance and in surroundings, the place resembled a modern country club. As we parked our cars in the open space facing the magnificent entrance we felt that at last our paths were to be cast in pleasant places.

But our disillusionment, which shortly commenced,

was before we left, complete. To begin with, we found that with the exception of two small rooms in the basement—one of which was employed as a kitchen, the other for a mess—and four other equally small rooms—servants quarters, located at the very top of the house—the building was shut and locked. To reach our sleeping quarters under the roof we were obliged to climb seven flights of stairs and after tumping a blanket roll and a ruck-sack up these, both our breath and enthusiasm had suffered abatement. The mess-room was dark and so small we could not all be seated at the same table. Another pleasing feature was that the water was a half a mile distant. All things considered, we preferred our barn at Pont Ste. Maxence to this, and were not backward in telling the Commander so. It was evident that this was not "Moscow."

We remained at the Château for three days, during which we were much bored since the park was made our bounds, and there was nothing to do; and then early in the afternoon of the twenty-seventh of January we once more climbed into our machines, knowing this time that when we shut off our motors it would be within range of the guns. Over roads cluttered with convoy and munition transport, we headed southeastward in the direction of Soissons. Through villages worn weary with the passing and repassing of countless troops, we went where the houses bore the chalked legends *"20 Hommes"* or *"10 Cheveaux"* or

"2 Officiers," according to the nature of the quarters within. The sound of the guns was all this time growing louder and more distinct. Toward four in the afternoon we emerged on a long straight road—the main Compiègne-Soissons route—and reaching a forlorn little village, shut off our motors. This was our station. We were at the front.

CHAPTER IV

IN ACTION—THE AISNE

AS you come along the Compiègne-Soissons road, proceeding in the direction of Soissons, about midway between the two cities you sight a small cluster of gray stone buildings. It is the village of Julzy. Here it was we had cast anchor. Before reaching the village you will have noticed a dark round spot in the walls. As you approach, this resolves itself into an arch. Passing through you will find yourself in a muddy stable yard. I say "muddy" advisedly for I firmly believe that whatever the season or whatever the weather conditions are, or may have been, you will find that courtyard muddy. Whether the mud is fed from perennial springs or gathers its moisture from the ambient atmosphere, I do not know. The fact remains, that courtyard was, is and always will be, muddy. Facing the arch on the farther side of the yard, stands a single-storied building of one room. Its inside dimensions are, perhaps, fifty by twenty-five feet. Access is had by a single door and three windows admit a dim light. We found it simply furnished with a wire-bottomed trough, raised about

three and a half feet above the floor and extending about double that from the walls on three sides of the room. This left free floor space enough to accommodate a table of planks stretched across *essence* boxes, flanked on either side by two benches belonging to the same school of design. Such was our cantonment. In the trough twenty of us slept, side by side. At the table we messed, wrote, mended tires, played chess or lanced boils. Two of the windows lacked glass, so there was plenty of cold air; a condition which a small stove did its inefficient best to combat. The galley was established in a tiny hut on the left of the yard and from here the food was transported to the mess by the two unfortunates who happened to be on "chow" duty. Since the courtyard was not sufficiently large to accommodate all the cars, half were placed in another yard about two hundred meters down the road, where also was established the *atelier*. At night a sentry was posted on the road between these two points and *"le mot"* was a condition precedent to passing, a circumstance which sometimes gave rise to embarrassment when the password was forgotten.

The village of Julzy is made up of some two score forbidding-looking houses. It is situated on the south bank of the Aisne and is bisected by the road from Compiègne to Soissons. At this time, February 1916, it was, as the shell travels, about four kilometers from the line. Though thus within easy reach of the

enemy's field artillery, it showed no signs of having been bombarded and during our entire stay only five or six shells were thrown in. This immunity was probably due to the insignificant size of the place and the fact that no troops were ever quartered there. Back of the village proper, on the top of a steep hill, was Haut Julzy, or Upper Julzy. Here a large percentage of the houses was partially demolished—from shell fire, one of the few remaining inhabitants informed me. Half way up the hill, between upper and lower Julzy, stands an ancient stone church. A line of reserve trenches, crossing the hill, traverses the churchyard. Here are buried a number of soldiers, *"mort pour la patrie."* Above one grave is a wooden cross upon which appears the inscription: "To an unknown English soldier; he died for his father's land." And this grave is even better kept and provided with flowers than the others.

The region round about Julzy is surely among the most beautiful in all France. Hills, plateaus and wooded valleys, through which flow small, clear streams, all combine to lend it natural charm, a charm of which even winter cannot rob it. Numerous villages are everywhere scattered about, and while those near the front had a war-worn aspect, in proportion to their distance from the line their freshness and attractiveness increased. Rail-head for this sector was Pierrefonds, a pleasant town overshadowed by the fairy-like castle from which it takes it name. It was

at Pierrefonds we obtained our supply of *essence*—gasoline. Off to the southwest, in a magnificent forest bearing the same name, is the quaint little city of Villers-Cotterets—by the Squad rechristened Veal Cutlets. It was here Dumas was born and lived. The city owed its chief interest to us, however, from the fact that here was located one of the field hospitals to which we transported wounded. Some twenty kilometers to the west of Julzy is the old city of Compiègne, reminiscent of Robert Louis Stevenson, and here too were located evacuation hospitals. Its curious town hall, its venerable houses, and dark, mysterious shops are interesting, but our most lasting memories of the city will be of its silent, wind-swept streets through which we carried our wounded on those dark, icy nights.

The day began at six-thirty A.M. when the detested alarm clock went into action, supplemented by shouts of "everybody out" and sleepy groans of protest. A quick shift from flea-bag to knickers and tunic, and a promissory toilet was accomplished by seven, by which time, also, the two orderlies for the day had set the table with coffee, bread and jam. This disposed of, the cars were cranked, and a bone-wrenching job this usually was, the motors being so stiff from the cold it was next to impossible to "turn them over." There was a squad rule for "lights out" at 9:30 P.M. but as there were always some individuals who wished to write or play chess or read after tnis

hour, excellent target practice was nightly furnished to those who had retired in the trough and who objected to the continued illumination. Thus I have seen a well-directed boot wipe out an intricate chess match as completely as did the German guns the forts of Liège. The "gunner" in these fusillades always endeavored to see that the ammunition employed—usually boots—was the property of someone else and the joy which a "direct hit" engendered was apt to suffer abatement on discovery that they were your boots which had been employed.

The schedule under which the Squad operated while on the Aisne was a varied one and yet so systematized that a driver could tell a fortnight in advance, by the list of sailings posted on the order board, where he should be and what his duties at any given day or hour. There were three regular route runs, to each of which were assigned two cars a day. These were known as "evacuation runs" from the fact that the *blessés*—wounded—were picked up at regularly established field dressing stations, from two and a half to fifteen kilometers back of the line, and transported to an "evacuation hospital," either at Villers Cotterets, Compiègne, or Pierrefonds. The longer of these routes was made twice each day, a run of about forty kilometers.

About two kilometers to the east of Julzy, on the north side of the river, is the village of Vic-sur-Aisne, at this time not much above a kilometer back of the

line. Here was established our picket post and here we maintained always three cars, serving in twenty-four hour shifts. From this station we served nine frontal *postes de sécours,* or line dressing stations, some of which were within five hundred meters of the German line. Such were the *postes* of Hautebraye and Vingre. The crossing of the Aisne to Reach Vic is made by a single-spanned iron bridge over which passed all the transport for this portion of the line. Because of the importance thus given it, the bridge was a continual object of the enemy's fire, it being within easy range. The village itself, considering the fact that it was within sight of the Germans and had been under more or less continuous fire for months, was not as complete a wreck as might be imagined. This was due to the fact that the buildings were of stone and the shelling was usually done with small calibre guns. To obstruct the enemy's view and prevent his spotting passing traffic the roads leading from the village were screened with brush and poles. These served their purpose in winter when the roads were muddy, but when the roads dried, the rising dust betrayed the passing of the transport and then the enemy was able to shell with a greater degree of accuracy. Our station at Vic was located in the carriage house of a château which stood on an eminence overlooking the river, about a quarter of a mile to the east of the village. When on duty there, we messed with some *sous-officiers* in the cellar of the

château, the place being fairly safe from shell *éclat* though not from a direct hit.

Besides the three route runs described and the Vic service, the Squad was subject to special calls at any time of the day or night from any part of our sector or the surrounding country. This service was known as "bureau duty," from the fact that the cars assigned to it were stationed at our office or "bureau," which was in telephonic communication with the line and region about. Twice a week one of the cars on bureau service was dispatched to Compiègne on "chow" foraging, an assignment much coveted since it meant a chance for a hot bath and a good feed.

Under this schedule a driver had one day in every seven for *repos*. This was more in theory than actuality, however, as the seventh day usually found work needed on his car.

We had reached Julzy on the 27th of January. On the first day of February we took over the sector from the retiring French ambulance section and that day went into action. Heretofore we had watched the passing panorama of war; now we were of it. My first voyage was an evacuation route and hence wholly back of the line. I went in company with another car and as there were only four *assis*—sitting cases—which the other car took, I had no passengers. Coming back from Courves, the road leads across a plateau which overlooks the Aisne valley, and the country behind the German lines was plainly visible.

It was from this plateau road that for the first time I saw shells bursting. The French batteries in the valley below were in action and over there in Bocheland white puffs of smoke showed where the shells were breaking.

Though I had several times been very close to the line, it was not until February was nine days old that I received my baptism of fire. On that day I was on twenty-four hour duty at Vic and my journal written just after I came off duty, will, perhaps give an idea of a typical shift at this station.

"*Julzy, February 10th.* Relieved the other cars at Vic promptly at eight o'clock yesterday morning. The French batteries were already in action but there was no response from the enemy till about ten, when a number of shells whistled by overhead, dropping into the village of Roche, about a half mile down the road. Towards noon the range was shortened and as we went to mess in the dug-out an *obus* struck the wall back of the château, a hundred yards away. After lunch I went out with a soldier to look for the *fussé*, as the bronze shell head is called. To my surprise, the man suddenly dropped flat on his face. Then I heard an awful screech, followed by a crash, as though a pile of lumber were falling, and a cloud of dust rose in a field, perhaps 90 meters away. Almost immediately two more crashed in. I am unable to analyze or describe my sensations and I question whether a trained psychologist would be much

better off. There is something "disturbing" about shell fire which is not conducive to abstract or analytical thought. I do not believe I was especially frightened; my feelings were more of curiosity. I knew this shelling would soon mean work for us, so I got back to my car and saw that everything was ready for marching. Meanwhile a shell had dropped just back of the château, getting one of the stretcher-bearers. Joe carried him to the dressing station at Roche where he died a little later. My first call came at two o'clock, from Roche. Here I got three men, just wounded by shell *éclat,* evacuating them to the field hospital at Atichy. Got back to Vic about four. Found the village still under fire, both our own and the enemy's fire having, if anything, increased. Both of the other cars were out, which meant I was due for the next call. Got into my sleeping bag to try to get warm but was hardly settled before a lieutenant, *médecin,* came in announcing a call for Vingre. In five minutes we were on our way. After leaving Vic the road was a sea of mud. An enemy observation balloon had the way in full view, so the word was *vite.*

"Through deserted shell-shattered villages we ploughed, the mud spraying us from tires to top and filling our eyes over the wind-break. It was nearing dusk as we reached the *poste,* a dug-out in the side of a hill. Just above us, on the crest was the line and we could hear distinctly the popping of hand

grenades between the battery salvos. Our men, one shot through the leg, the other hit in the chest, were brought in from a *boyau* and we started back, this time going more slowly. It was a desolate scene through which we passed, made more desolate by the fading light of a gray day. The miry, deserted road, the stricken villages, the overgrown fields—it seemed the very stamping ground of death and the voice of that death passed over head in whining shrieks. There was little of life to dispute its reign. Now and then, at the nozzle of a dug-out, there appeared a soldier's head, but that was all and, for the rest, there might not have been a soul within a thousand miles.

"One of my *blessés* required an immediate operation, so I passed on through Vic and headed for Compiègne, reaching there about 7 o'clock and evacuating to St. Luke's Hospital. At once started back to my station. Found the cook had saved me some dinner and after stowing this crawled into my flea-bag. The blankets were barely around me when a *brancardier* came in with a call for the *poste* at Haute-braye. The moon gave a little light but not enough to drive fast with safety, so we drove fast and let safety look out for itself, our motto being not "safety first" but "save first." We found our man ready, shot through the body, raving with delirium, his hands bound together to prevent him tearing his wound. Though a part of our way was exposed to the enemy's machine gun fire, the road was too pitted with shell

holes to permit of fast driving with so badly wounded a man and so we crept back to Vic. The order was again to Compiègne. It was close to midnight when, numbed with cold, we rolled through the silent streets of the town. On my return trip I twice found myself nodding over the wheel. Nevertheless, we made the thirty-two kilometers in less than an hour. Found Vic quiet, the shelling having ceased and save for an occasional trench flare, little to indicate it was the front. At one o'clock I turned in on the stone floor, this time to rest undisturbed till morning.

"Roused out at 6:30 to greet a gray winter day and falling snow. The batteries on both sides were already in action and the "put-put-put" of machine guns came to us through the crisp air. The relief cars rolled in at eight and we at once cranked up and set out for quarters. As we crossed the Aisne, the Germans were shelling the bridge, with 150's, I think. They had the exact range, as regards distance, but the shells were falling about a hundred yards to one side, throwing up great geysers of water as they struck the river. On reaching the other side I stopped and watched them come in. They came four to the minute. Reached quarters here, Julzy, at 8:30,—completing the twenty-four hour shift."

So it was I had my baptism of fire. Perhaps I was not frightened by those first shells; curiosity may have supplanted other sensations but as time went on, and I saw the awful, destructive power of shell fire, when

I had seen buildings leveled and men torn to bloody shreds, the realization of their terribleness became mine and with it came a terror of that horrible soul-melting shriek. And now after a year and a half of war, during which I have been scores of times under fire and have lived for weeks at a time in a daily bombarded city, I am no more reconciled to shell fire than at first. If anything, the sensation is worse and personally I do not believe there is such a thing as becoming "used" to it.

It was early in February that I got my first experience at night driving without lights. To you gentlemen who have shot rapids, great game and billiards, who have crossed the Painted Desert and the "line," who have punched cows in Arizona and heads in Mile End Road, who have killed moose in New Brunswick and time in Monte Carlo, who have treked and skied and tumped, to you who have tried these and still crave a sensation, let me recommend night driving without lights over unfamiliar shell-pitted roads, cluttered with traffic, within easy range of the enemy, challenged every now and then by a sentry who has a loaded gun and no compunction in using it. Your car, which in daylight never seems very powerful has now become a very Juggernaut of force. At the slightest increase of gas it fairly jumps off the road. Throttle down as you may, the speed seems terrific. You find yourself with your head thrust over the wheel, your eyes staring ahead with an intensity which makes them

ache—staring ahead into nothing. Now and then the blackness seems, if possible, to become more dense and you throw out your clutch and on your brake and come to a dead stop, climbing out to find your radiator touching an overturned caisson. Or mayhap a timely gunflash or the flare of a trench light will show that you are headed off the road and straight for a tree. A little farther on, the way leads up a hill—the pulling of the engine is the only thing that tells you this—and then, just as you top the rise, a star-bomb lights the scene with a dense white glare and the *brancardier* by your side rasps our *"Vite, pour l'amour de Dieu, vite; ils peuvent nous voir,"* and you drop down the other side of that hill like the fall of a gun hammer. Then in a narrow mud-gutted lane in front of a dug-out you back and fill and finally turn, your bloody load is eased in and you creep back the way you have come, save that now every bump and jolt seems to tear your flesh as you think of those poor, stricken chaps in behind. Yes, there is something of tenseness in lightless night driving under such conditions. Try it, gentlemen.

On the afternoon and night of February 12th, there was an attack on the line near Vingre, preceded by drum fire. As such things go, it was but a small affair. It would perhaps have a line in the communiqué as, "North of the Aisne the enemy attempted a *coup* upon a salient of our line, but we repulsed him with loss." That and nothing more. But to those who were

there it was very real. The big guns spat their exchange of hate; rifle fire crackled along the line; the machine guns sewed the air with wicked staccato sounds and men with set jaws and bayonets charged to death through barbed entanglements. As night closed down the flare-bombs spread their fitful glare on mutilated things which that morning had been living men. Now set in the bloody back-wash of wounded. With the coming of the night, the enemy lengthened the range of his artillery, so as to harass the transport, and the zone back of the line was seared with shells. The field dressing station at Roche, near Vic, suffered greatly and it soon became apparent that its evacuation was necessary.

I had already been on duty fourteen hours when the call reached quarters for the entire Squad. My journal for the 13th reads: "I'm too tired for much writing as I've had but two hours sleep in the last forty, during which I have driven close to three hundred kilometers, been three times under fire, and had but two hot meals. The entire Squad was turned to just after I got into the blankets last night. Roche was being bombarded and it was necessary to take out all the wounded. There were a number of new shell holes in the road and this made interesting driving. It was one-thirty when I reached Compiègne, three when I had completed my evacuation, and four-fifteen this morning when I reached quarters. Up at six-thirty and working on my 'bus. This afternoon made route

3. Tonight I am *bien fatigué*. Firing light today, possibly because of sleet and rain. The attack was evidently repulsed."

The Squad did good work that night. Afterwards we were commended by the Colonel in command. It was in this attack that "Bill" won his *Croix de Guerre* when *"à un endroit particulièrement exposé, au moment ou les obus tombaient avec violence, a arrêté sa voiture pour prendre des blessés qu'il a aidé avec courage et sang-froid."* A week later he was decorated, our muddy little courtyard being the setting for the ceremony.

In celebration of his decoration, Bill determined to give a "burst." There would seem to be few places less adapted to the serving of a banquet or less capable of offering material than poor little war-torn Julzy. Nevertheless, at six o'clock on the evening of February 27th the Squad sat down to a repast that would have done credit to any hotel. Bill had enlisted the services of a Paris caterer and not only was the food itself perfection but it was served in a style that, after our accustomed tin cup, tin plate service, positively embarrassed us. Our dingy quarters were decorated and made light by carbide lights; a snowy cloth covered our plank table; stacks of china dishes—not tin—appeared at each place; there were chairs to sit upon. Even flowers were not forgotten and Bill, being a Yale man, had seen to it that beside the plates of the other Yale men in the Squad were placed

bunches of violets. The artist of the Section designed a menu card but we were too busy crashing into the food to pay any attention to the menu. For a month past we had been living mostly on boiled beef and army bread and the way the Squad now eased into regular food was an eye-opener to dietitians. Hors d'oeuvres, fish, ham, roasts, vegetables, salads, sweets, wines and smokes disappeared like art in a Hun raid. Twenty men may have gotten through a greater quantity and variety of food in three hours and lived, but it is not on record. And through it all the guns snarled and roared unheeded and the flare bombs shed their fitful glare. Verily, in after years, when men shall foregather and the talk flows in Epicurean channels, if one there be present who was at Bill's "burst," surely his speech shall prevail.

February, which had come in with mild weather, lost its temper as it advanced; the days became increasingly cold and snow fell. The nights were cruel for driving. One night I remember especially. I had responded to a call just back of the line where I got my *blessé,* a poor chap shot through the lung. It was snowing, the flakes driving down with a vicious force that stung the eyes and brought tears. In spite of the snow it was very black and to show a light, meant to draw fire. We crept along, for fear of running into a ditch or colliding with traffic. At kilometer 8 my engine began to miss. I got out and changed plugs, but this did not help much and we limped along. The

opiate given the *blessé* had begun to wear off, and his groans sounded above the whistling of the wind. Once in the darkness I lost the road, going several kilometers out of my way before I realized the error. The engine was getting weaker every minute but by this time I was out of gun range and able to use a lantern. With the aid of the light, I was able to make some repairs, though my hands were so benumbed I could scarcely hold the tools. The car now marched better and I started ahead. Several times a *"qui vive"* came out of the darkness, to which I ejaculated a startled "France." The snow-veiled clock in Villers-Cotterets showed the hour was half after midnight when we made our way up the choked streets. But "the load" had come through safely.

Uncomfortable as these runs were—and every member of the Squad made them not once, but many times—they were what lent fascination to the work. They made us feel that it was worth while and, however small the way, we were helping.

It was about this time that the Service was militarized and incorporated into the Automobile Corps of the French army. Thereafter, we were classed as "Militaires" and wore on our tunics the red winged symbol of the Automobile Corps. We were now subject to all the rules and regulations governing regularly enlisted men, with one exception—the duration of our enlistments. We were permitted to enlist for six month periods with optional three months ex-

tensions, and were not compelled to serve "for duration." As incident to the militarization, we received five sous a day per man—the pay of the French *poilu,* and in addition were entitled to "touch" certain articles, such as shelter tents, sabots, tobacco, etc. We had already been furnished with steel helmets and gas masks. We were also granted the military franchise for our mail.

While at Julzy, the personnel of the Squad changed considerably. The terms of several men having expired, they left, their places being taken by new recruits. Thus "Hippo," "Bob," "Brooke," and "Magum" joined us. Nor must I forget to mention another important addition to our number—the puppy mascot "Vic." He was given to us by a Tirailleur, who being on the march could not take care of him, and one of the fellows brought him back to quarters in his pocket, a tiny soft, white ball who instantly wriggled himself into the Squad's affection. When we got him he could scarcely toddle and was never quite certain where his legs would carry him. Yet even then the button, which he fondly believed a tail, stuck belligerently upright, like a shattered mast from which had been shot the flag. For he, being a child of war, had fear of nothing, no, not gun fire itself, and as he grew older we took him with us on our runs and he was often under shell fire. He was always at home, in château or dugout, always sure of himself and could tell one of our khaki uniforms a mile away,

picking us out of a mob of blue clad soldiers. Such was Vic, the Squad mascot.

On the evening of March 3rd, orders came in to be prepared to move and the following afternoon, in a clinging, wet snow, we left Julzy and proceeded to the village of Courtieux, some three kilometers distant. The village is in the general direction of Vic-sur-Aisne, but back from the main road. For months successive bodies of troops had been quartered here and we found it a squalid, cheerless hole, fetlock deep in mud. Our billet was a small, windowless house, squatting in the mud and through which the wind swept the snow. There was also a shed, with bush sides and roof wherein our mess was established.

Why we had been ordered from Julzy to this place but three kilometers away, it would be impossible to say. We were maintaining the same schedule and Courtieux was certainly not as convenient a place from which to operate. We cogitated much on the matter, but reached no conclusion. It was just one of the mysteries of war. The three days succeeding our arrival were uncomfortable ones. The weather continued bad with low temperature. When we were off duty there was nowhere to go, save to bed and there were no beds. What Courtieux lacked in other things it made up in mud and our cars were constantly mired. As a relief from the monotony of the village, three of us, being off duty one afternoon, made a peregrination to the front line trenches, passing

through miles of winding connecting *boyoux* until we lost all sense of direction. We really had no right to go up to the line but we met with no opposition, all the soldiers we met greeting us with friendly camaraderie and the officers responding to our salutes with a "bonjour." We found the front line disappointingly quiet. There was little or no small arm firing going on, though both sides were carrying on a desultory shelling. Through a sandbagged loophole we could see a low mud escarpment about 90 meters away—the enemy's line. It was not an exciting view, the chief interest being lent by the fact that in taking it you were likely to have your eye shot out. All things considered, the excursion was a rather tame affair, though we who had made it did our best to play it up to the rest of the Squad upon our return.

We remained at Courtieux but three days and then, at nine o'clock on the morning of the fourth, assembled in convoy at Julzy. It was one of the coldest mornings of the winter; the trees were masses of ice and the snow creaked beneath the tires, while our feet, hands and ears suffered severely. As usual, we had no idea of our destination. That our division had been temporarily withdrawn from the line and that we were to be attached to another division, was the extent of our information. By the time the convoy had reached Compiègne we were all rather well

numbed. When the C. O. halted in the town, he had failed to note a *pâtisserie* was in the vicinity and the motors had hardly been shut off before the Squad en masse stormed the place, consuming *gateaux* and stuffing more *gateaux* into its collective pockets. Meanwhile, outside, the "Lieut." blew his starting whistle in vain.

Shortly before noon we made the city of Montdidier, where we lunched in the hotel and waited for the laggard cars to come up. About three we again got away, passing through a beautiful rolling country by way of Pierrefonds and as darkness was falling parked our cars in the town of Moreuil. It was too late to find a decent billet for the night. A dirty, rat-infested warehouse was all that offered and after looking this over, most of us decided, in spite of the cold, to sleep in our cars. Our mess was established in the back room of the town's principal *café* and the fresh bread, which we obtained from a nearby bakery, made a welcome addition to army fare. Moreuil proved to be a dull little town, at that time some twenty-five kilometers back of the line. Aside from an aviation field there was little of interest.

On the third day of our stay we were reviewed and inspected by the ranking officer of the sector. He did not appear very enthusiastic and expressed his doubt as to our ability to perform the work for which we were destined, an aspersion which greatly vexed us. Our vindication came two months later when, having

tested us in action, he gave us unstinted praise and spoke of us in the highest terms.

After the review, the C. O. announced that we had received orders to move and would leave the following day for a station on the Somme. He refused to confirm the rumor that our destination was "Moscow."

CHAPTER V

THE SOMME

IT was ten-fifty on a snowy, murky morning—Friday, March 10th—that our convoy came to a stop in the village of Méricourt, destined to be our headquarters for some months to come. There was little of cheer in the prospect. One street—the road by which we had entered—two abortive side streets, these lined with one or two-storied peasants' cottages, and everywhere, inches deep, a sticky, clinging mud: such was Méricourt. This entry from my journal fairly expresses our feelings at the time: "In peace times this village must be depressive; now with added grimness of war it is dolorous. A sea of mud, shattered homes, a cesspool in its center, rats everywhere. This is Méricourt: merry hell would be more expressive and accurate."

Our first impression was not greatly heightened by viewing the quarters assigned to us, and we felt with Joe that "they meant very little in our young lives." Two one-and-a-half storied peasants' cottages, with debris-littered floor and leaking roof, these rheumatic structures forming one side of a sort of courtyard and

commanding a splendid view of a large well filled cesspool, constituted our cantonment. It would have taken a Jersey real estate agent to find good points in the prospect. The optimist who remarked that at least there were no flies was cowed into silence by the rejoinder that the same could be said of the North Pole. However, we set to work, cleaned and disinfected, constructed a stone causeway across "the campus," and by late afternoon had, to some extent, made the place habitable. A bevy of rats at least seemed to consider the place so, and we never lacked for company of the rodent species.

The twenty of us set up our stretcher beds in the two tiny rooms and the attic, and were at home. One of the ground floor rooms—and it had only the ground for a floor—possessed a fireplace, the chimney of which led into the attic above. Here it became tired of being a chimney, resigned its duties and became a smoke dispenser. It was natural that the ground floor dwellers having a fireplace should desire fire. It was natural, also, that the dwellers above, being imbued with strong ideas on the subject of choking to death, should object to that fire. Argument ensued. For a time those below prevailed but the attic dwellers possessed the final word and when their rebuttal, in the shape of several cartridges, was dropped down the chimney on the fire, those below lost interest in the matter and there prevailed an intense and eager longing for the great outdoors.

We established our mess in what in peace times was a tiny café, in the back room of which an adipose proprietress, one of the few remaining *civiles,* still dispensed "pinard" and hospitality. It was in the same back room one night that a soldier, exhibiting a hand grenade, accidently set it off, killing himself, a comrade, and wounding five others, whom we evacuated. Incidentally the explosion scared our Zouave cook who at the time was sleeping in an adjoining room. He was more frightened than he had been since the first battle of the Marne.

The front room, which was our mess hall, was just long enough to permit the twenty of us, seated ten to a side, to squeeze about our plank table. The remaining half of the room was devoted to the galley, where the Zouave held forth with his pots and pans and reigned supreme. The walls of this room had once bilious, colicky color. Great beads of sweat were been painted a sea green, but now were faded into a always starting out and trickling down as though the house itself were in the throes of a deadly agony.

Méricourt is situated about one-fifth of a mile from the right bank of the river Somme, and at this time was about seven and one-half or eight kilometers from the front line. The Somme at this point marked the dividing line between the French and English army, the French holding to the south, the English to the north. Though within easy range of the enemy's mid-calibre artillery, it was seldom shelled, and I can

recall but one or two occasions during our entire stay when shells passed over.

As on the Aisne, we got our wounded from a number of scattered *postes,* some close to the line, others farther back, some located in villages, others in mere dugouts in the side of a hill. Evacuations were usually made to the town of Villers-Bretonneau where were located a number of field hospitals, or to an operating hospital at the village of Cérisy about fifteen kilometers from the line. A regular schedule of calls was maintained to certain *postes,* the cars making rounds twice a day. Such were the *postes* at the villages of Proyart, Chuignes, Chuignolles and in the dugouts at Baraquette and Fontaine-Cappy, all some kilometers back of the line, but under intermittent shell fire. Besides these *postes* there were several others which because of their close proximity to the enemy and their exposure to machine-gun fire could only be made at night. There was Raincourt, less than half a kilometer from the enemy's position, the Knotted Tree, four hundred meters from the Germans, and actually in the second line trench, where in turning, the engine had to be shut off and the car pushed by hand, less the noise of the motor draw fire. There, too, was the *poste* at the village of Eclusier, a particularly fine run since it was reached by a narrow, exceedingly rough road which bordered a deep canal and was exposed throughout its length to *mitrailleuse* fire. Besides this, the road was lined with

batteries for which the Boches were continually "searching."

We went into action on the afternoon of the same day we reached Méricourt. My orders were to go to a point indicated on the map as the Route Nationale, there pick up my *blessés* and evacuate them to the town of Villers-Bretonneau. I was farther instructed not to go down this road too far as I would drive into the enemy's lines. How I was to determine what was "too far" until it was "too late" or how I was to determine the location of the *poste*, a dugout beneath the road, was left to my own solution. With these cheering instructions I set out. I reached the village of Proyart through which my route lay, noted with interest the effect of bombardment, passed on and came to the Route Nationale. Here, as were my instructions, I turned to the left. I was now headed directly toward the line which I knew could not be very far away and which transversed the road ahead. I pushed rather cautiously up two small hills, my interest always increasing as I neared the top and anticipated what sort of greeting might be awaiting me. I was on my third hill and feeling a bit depressed and lonesome, not having seen a person since leaving the sentry at Proyart, when I heard a shout somewhere behind me. Looking back I beheld a soldier wildly semaphoring. It did not take me long to turn the car and slide back down the hill. Reaching the bottom, I drew up by the soldier

who informed me that the crest of the hill was in full view of the enemy and under fire from the machine guns. I felt that the information was timely.

The *poste* proved to be a dugout directly beneath where I had stopped my car. Here I secured a load of wounded and by dusk had safely evacuated them to the hospital at Villers-Bretonneau. Consulting my map at the hospital it became evident that there was a more direct route back to quarters and I determined on this. As I was by no means sure of the location of the line I drove without lights, and as a result crashed into what proved to be a pile of rocks but which I had taken to be a pile of snow, the jar almost loosening my teeth fillings. The car was apparently none the worse for the encounter and I reached quarters without further mishap.

The aftermath of the mishap occurred next day. Driving at a good pace up a grade—fortunately with no wounded on board—I suddenly found the steering gear would not respond to the wheel. There was half a moment of helpless suspense, then the car shot off the side of the road down a steep incline, hit a boulder, and turned completely upside down. As we went over I managed to kick off the switch, lessening the chance of an explosion. The Quartermaster who was with me, and I were wholly unable to extricate ourselves, but some soldiers, passing at the time, lifted the car off us and we crawled out none the worse. "Old Number Nine," save for a broken

steering rod, the cause of the spill, and a small radiator leak, was as fit as ever and half an hour later, the rod replaced, was once more rolling.

Our picket *poste* was established at the village of Cappy. To reach the village from Méricourt we passed over a stretch of road marked with the warning sign "This road under shell fire: convoys or formed bodies of troops will not pass during daylight." Continuing, we crossed the Somme, at this point entering the English line, and proceeded to the village of Bray. Thence the road wandered through a rolling land for a kilometer or so, again crossing the river and a canal at the outskirts of the village.

Cappy lay in a depression behind a rise of ground about a kilometer and a half from the line. In peace times it was doubtless a rather attractive little place of perhaps three hundred people. Now, devastated by days and months of bombardment, and the passing of countless soldiers, deserted by its civil population and invaded by countless rats, it presented an aspect forlorn beyond imagination. On a gray winter's day, with sleet beating down and deepening the already miry roads, and a dreary wind whistling through the shattered houses, the place cried out with the desolation of war. And when, at night, a full moon shone through the stripped rafters, when the rats scuttled about and when, perhaps, there was no firing and only the muffled pop of a trench light, the spirit of death itself stalked abroad and the ghosts of the men who

had there met their doom haunted its grewsome, cluttered streets. And then while the silence hung like a pall until it fairly oppressed one, there would come the awful screech, and the noises of hell would break loose. There was no way of telling when the bombardment would come. It might be at high noon or at midnight, at twilight or as the day broke. Nor could the duration be guessed. Sometimes a single shell crashed in; sometimes a single salvo of a battery, or again, the bombardment would continue for an hour or more. It was this uncertainty which gave the place a tense, uncomfortable atmosphere so that even when there was no shelling the quiet was an uncanny quiet which was almost harder to bear than the shelling itself.

In Cappy no one remained above ground more than was necessary. Nearly every house had its cellar and these cellars were deepened, roofed with timbers and piled high with sand-bags. A cave so constructed was reasonably bomb-proof from small shells—77s—but offered little resistance to anything larger and I recall several occasions when a shell of larger calibre, making a direct hit, either killed or wounded every occupant of such a shelter. The resident population of the town was limited to a group of *brancardiers,* some grave-diggers, the crews of several goulash batteries and some doctors and surgeons. I must not forget to mention the sole remaining representative of the civil population. He was an old, old man, so old

it seemed the very shells respected his age and war itself deferred to his feebleness. Clad in nondescript rags, his tottering footsteps supported by a staff, at any hour of the day or night he could be seen making his uncertain way among what were the ruins of what had once been a prosperous town—his town. With him, also tottering, was always a wizened old dog who seemed the Methuselah of all dogs. Panting along behind his master, his glazed eyes never leaving him, the dog too staggered. There, alone in the midst of this crucified town, the twain dwelt, refusing to leave what to them was yet home. And daily as their town crumbled, they crumbled, until at last one morning we found the old chap dead, his dog by his side. That day was laid to rest the last citizen of Cappy.

The dressing-station was located in what in peace times was the town hall or *Mairie,* a two-story brick building having a central structure flanked by two small wings. The building was banked with sandbags which, while not rendering it by any means shell-proof, did protect it from shrapnel and *éclat.* The central room was devoted to the wounded who were brought in from the trenches on little, two-wheeled, hand-pushed trucks, each truck supporting one stretcher. A shallow trough was built around the sides of the room and in this, upon straw, the wounded were placed in rows, while awaiting the doctor. In this portion of the building was also located the mortuary where those who died after being brought in

were placed preparatory to burial. The bodies were placed two on a stretcher, the head of one resting on the feet of another. It was a ghastly place, this little room, with its silent, mangled tenants, lying there awaiting their last bivouac. On one side of the room was a small, silver crucifix above which hung the tri-colored flag of the Republic guarding those who had died that it might live.

In the left wing was the emergency operating-room where the surgeons worked, frequently under fire. At the opposite end of the building was the room we had for our quarters and where we slept when occasion permitted. The place was quite frequently hit—on five separate occasions while I was in the building—and its occupants suffered many narrow escapes. The location was regarded as so unsafe that an elaborate *abri* was finally constructed back of the *Mairie*. This was an extraordinarily well-built and ample affair, consisting of several tunnels seven feet high in the center, walled and roofed with heavy galvanized iron supported by stout beams. The roof at the highest point was fully ten feet below the surface of the ground. There were two rows of shelves running along both sides of the tunnels which had a total capacity of forty stretcher cases. At one end was a small operating room, and there were two exits so that if one became blocked the occupants might find egress through the other. Both of these exits were winding so as to prevent the admission of flying shell frag-

ments and were draped with curtains to keep out the poison gas. Beside these curtains stood tubs of anti-gas solution for their drenching. This structure was proof against all save the heaviest shells and took some eight weeks in building.

When on duty at Cappy we messed with some medical *sous-officiers* in a dugout, entrance to which was had by descending a steep flight of steps. Down in this cellar, in the dim twilight which there prevailed, we enjoyed many a meal. The officers were a genial lot, like most Frenchmen delightfully courteous, and much given to quaffing pinard. Their chief occupation was the making of paper knives from copper shrapnel bands, and they never lacked for material, for each day the Boche threw in a fresh supply.

One of these chaps through constant opportunity and long practice could give a startling imitation of the shriek of a shell, an accomplishment which got him into trouble, for happening one day to perform this specialty while a non-appreciative and startled Colonel was passing, he was presented with eight days' arrest.

The cook of the mess was a believer in garlic—I might say a strong believer. Where he acquired the stuff amidst such surroundings was a mystery beyond solution, but acquire it he certainly did. Put him in the middle of the Sahara Desert and I am prepared to wager that within a half hour that cook would dig up some garlic. He put it into everything, rice, meat,

whatever we ate. I am convinced that, supposing he could have made a custard pie, he would have added garlic. His specialty was beef boiled in wine, a combination hard on the beef, hard on the wine, and hard on the partaker thereof.

Coming out of the cellar from mess one noon—a wet dismal day I remember—I was startled into immobility to hear the splendid strains of the "Star Spangled Banner," magnificently played on a piano. I was still standing at attention and the last note had barely died away when the one remaining door of a half-demolished house opened and a tall, handsome young fellow with the stripes of a corporal appeared, saluted and bade me enter. I did so and found myself in a small room upon the walls of which hung the usual military trappings. Stacked in the corners and leaning against the walls were a number of simple wooden crosses with the customary inscription *"Mort pour la patrie."* Five soldiers rose and bade me welcome. They were a group of grave diggers and here they dwelt amid their crosses. Their profession did not seem to have affected their spirits, and they were as jolly a lot as I have ever seen, constantly chaffing each other, and when the chap at the piano—who, by the way, before the war had been a musician at the Carlton in London, and who spoke excellent English—struck a chord they all automatically broke into song. It was splendidly done and they enjoyed it as thoroughly as did I. The piano they had rescued from

"In Scores—Hundreds—of Places There Remained but a Pile of Stones and a Yawning Hole"

a wrecked château at the other end of the town and to them it was a God-send indeed. Before I left, at my request they sang the *Marseillaise*. I have seldom heard anything finer than when in that little, stricken town, amidst those grewsome tokens of war's toll, these men stood at attention and sounded forth the stirring words of their country's hymn. When I left it was with a feeling that surely with such a spirit animating a people, there could be but one outcome to the struggle.

We had another twenty-four hour station at the village of Cérisy some fifteen or more kilometers back of the line where was located an operating hospital. Here we maintained always one car for the transportation of such wounded as required evacuation to railhead. At this station we were privileged to sleep on stretchers in the same tent with the wounded. Personally I found one night in their quarters was quite enough for me. The groaning, the odor of anaesthetics, the blood, the raving of the delirious and "the passing" of two of the inmates before morning drove me out to my car, where I often slept when on duty at the station.

We soon began to feel completely at home at Méricourt. Our schedule kept us busy without overworking us and there was just enough risk in the life to lend it spice. We had a splendid commander, an efficient chief, and as a result the squad worked in entire

harmony. At this time we were attached to the 3rd Colonials, a reckless, hard-fighting bunch, as fine a lot as serve the tri-color. The relations existing between ourselves and the French could not have been more cordial. The innate courtesy and kindness which is so characteristic of the people found expression in so many ways and their appreciation so far exceeded any service we rendered that we could not help but be warmly drawn toward them, while their cheerful devotion and splendid courage held always our admiration.

Perhaps a few entries taken at random from my journal will serve as well as anything to give some idea of our life and the conditions under which we worked.

"Tuesday, March 14th. After a rat-disturbed night, got away on Route No. 3 to Proyart and Baraquette, evcauating to Cérisy. At four this afternoon, with Brooke as orderly, made same route, evacuating to Villers Bretonneux. There were so many *blessés* that I had to return to Baraquette for another load. We are just in from Villers-Bretonneux at ten P.M. after a drive through the rain.

"Saturday, March 18th. On route No. 2 to Chuignolles. Road was under fire so sentry refused to let me return over it, as the way was up grade and with a loaded car I could not go fast. Ran down it this afternoon, evacuating by another route. Put in an hour today making an almost bedstead out of old

bloody stretchers and now the rats will have to jump a foot or so off the floor if they want to continue to use me as a speedway.

"Thursday, March 22nd. Slept well in the car at Cappy but lost all inclination for breakfast on opening door of stretcher bearer's room and seeing two bodies, one with its jaws shot away, the other, brought in from "No Man's Land"—half eaten by rats. Got a call to Chuignes before noon, evacuating to Cérisy. Of course worked on my car this afternoon; that goes without saying—the work, not the car. Tomorrow we have another one of those dashed inspections, this time the General commanding the Division.

"Thursday, March 30th. To Cappy early, with as many of the Squad as were off duty, to attend the funeral of the Médecin Chef. He was killed yesterday when peering over the parapet. It was a sad affair, yet withal impressive. We walked from the little shell-torn town, Cappy, to the cemetery just beyond the village, following the simple flag-draped box upon which rested the tunic and *képi;* and then while the war planes circled and dipped above us and all around the guns spoke, we paid our last respects to a very gallant man. Waited till ten for wounded. At the exact minute I was leaving three shells came in. One burst by the church and the other two just back of my machine as I crossed the bridge. They must have come from a small bore gun, possibly a mortar, as they were preceded by a screech as with a rifle shell. Vis-

ited regimental dentist this afternoon and found him operating on a *poilu* whose teeth had been knocked out by a Boche gun butt in a recent charge. Tonight the guns are going strong.

"Wednesday, April 8th. The messroom presented a ghastly sight this morning, a hand grenade having been accidently exploded there last night, blowing two men to bits which bits are still hanging to the walls. Got my spark plugs in shape this morning. This afternoon attempted to take a nap but a confounded battery just stationed here insisted on going into action and as the shots were at half minute intervals I got to counting the seconds in the intervals, banishing all chances of sleep. Two of the Squad are down with the *gale*—a skin disease contracted from the *blessés*, and which seems almost epidemic with the Division."

It was towards the end of March and hence some three months after leaving Paris, that one morning I received orders to evacuate a load of wounded to the railroad hospital at Amiens some forty kilometers from Méricourt. Amiens is a modern city, one of the most pleasant in France, a city of about one hundred thousand inhabitants with up-to-date shops, tramways, tea rooms and a decided air of gaiety. As I drove my mud-spattered ambulance down its main street I felt singularly out of place. An hour and a half before I had been within the rifle range of the German trenches where men were battling to the death and big guns barked their hate and now, as though

transported on a magic carpet, I found myself in the midst of peace where dainty women tripped by, children laughed at play and life untrammeled by war ran its course. After the weeks amid the mud and turmoil of the front, the transition was at first stupefying. After evacuating my wounded I parked my car and being off duty for the rest of the day I strolled about gaping like a countryman. "A burst" at the best restaurant I could find and a good cigar put me in an appreciative frame of mind and my impression of Amiens will always remain the most favorable. Though the city had been in the hands of the Huns for nearly a fortnight in the early part of the war and had several times been the object of air raids, there was little indication of either. The beautiful cathedral was piled high with sandbags and the beautiful windows were screened as precaution against bomb *éclat,* but of the precautions such as I later saw in Bar-le-Duc, there were none.

Amiens at this time was the administrative headquarters of the English army of the Somme. Its streets were alive with English officers and Tommies. There were many "Jocks" in their kilties, besides, of course, many French officers. Being well back of the lines it was a great place for swanking, a condition of which the English officers especially took full advantage, and in their whipcords and shining Sam Brouns they were the last word in military sartorialism.

Having now been at the front for three months I

became entitled to *la permission,* the six days' leave in theory granted the soldier once every three months. George's *permission* was also due and we managed to arrange it so that we secured leave simultaneously. One of our cars was so well wrecked that it had to be sent to Paris, and accordingly we secured the assignment of taking this in. This car had lost its mudguards and part of the top of the driving seat, its lockers were gone and its sides had been pierced by shell splinters. It certainly looked as if "it had been through the war." It was afterwards sent to New York and there put on exhibition at the Allied Bazaar. We set out for Paris on the morning of April fifteenth. It was a fearful day for driving, hail and rain and a piercing wind, but we were *en permission* so what cared we. It was on this voyage that, for the first and only time during my service in the army, I saw lancers. This group was some seventy kilometers back of the line. With their burnished casques, graceful weapons and fluttering pennants they have left me one of the few memories of the picturesque which the war has furnished.

We made Beauvais in time for luncheon; found the little restaurant and our mere appearance was sufficient to set the little waitress off into a severe attack of giggles. By four that afternoon we were in Paris. After one hundred days in the war zone, it seemed like another world. We took the military oath not to reveal information likely to be of value to the

enemy and were free to do what we liked for six days. Personally, as I remember it, I pretty well divided the time between taking hot baths and consuming unlimited quantities of white bread and fresh butter. Often we found ourselves subconsciously listening and missing something, the rumble of the guns. We enjoyed the respite but the end of our *permission* found us willing, almost eager, to get back "out there."

It was after midnight—Easter morning—and the rain was falling when we ploughed our muddy way across "the campus" at Méricourt. It was cold and the rat-infested garret in the flickering light of an oil lamp, looked dismal enough as we felt our way across its dirty floor. Outside the sky was now and then lighted by a flare and from all around came the boom of the guns. We were home.

CHAPTER VI

THE SOMME CONTINUED

MAY opened with delightfully warm weather, a condition that was not to continue. The brown fields were clothed in green. Up to within a few kilometers of the line the land had been cultivated and wheat and oats flourished as though shells were not passing over and the grim Reaper himself were not ever present.

Early in the month our Division moved, going into *repos* some fifteen kilometers back of the line. It is a simple statement—"our division moved." But think of twenty thousand men plodding along, twenty thousand brown guns bobbing and twenty thousand bayonets flopping against as many hips. Think of twenty thousand blue steel helmets covering as many sweaty, dusty heads; think of the transport for the men, the horses straining in their traces, the creaking wagons, the rumbling artillery, the clanging soup wagons, the whizzing staff cars and the honking of *camion* horns —think of this and you have some idea of what is embraced in the statement "our division moved." We did not follow them, though we did assign four cars to serve them during *repos* and to take care of the

sick. Instead we were attached to the incoming division, the 2nd Colonials.

My journal shows there were some hectic days in May. In the record of May second I find: "Rolled pretty much all night, one call taking me to Eclusier. The road was shelled behind me while I was at the *poste,* knocking a tree across the way so that on my way back, the night being so dark, I could see absolutely nothing and I hit the tree and bent a guard. It's as nasty a run as I have ever made, a canal on one side, batteries on the other, and the whole way exposed to machine gun fire. Expected to be relieved here this morning but one of the replacement cars is out of commission so that I am on for another twenty-four hours. Today I measured the distance from where I was sitting last night to where the shell hit. It was exactly fourteen paces."

Again a week later: "Two cars out of commission, so I am fated for another forty-eight hours' shift here in Cappy. Last night was uneventful. Today we have been bombarded five times. So far have made but two runs, returning from second under fire. We have been ordered to sleep tonight in the partially completed dugout, so I am writing this fifteen feet underground, with sand bags piled high above my head. Verily the day of the cave man has returned. Now for the blanket and, thanks to the dugout, a reasonable assurance of greeting tomorrow's sun."

It was in May that Josh won his recognition for bringing in his wounded from Eclusier under machine gun fire. I was not there but I know he could not have been cooler had he been driving down Broadway.

For me the month was made memorable by receiving a new car. "Old Number Nine" I had driven close to seven thousand kilometers. In all these months she had never failed me and I had grown to have a real affection for the old bus. It was, therefore, with a distinct feeling of regret that I relinquished her wheel to her new driver. My new command "New Number Nine—for I had obtained permission to retain the same number—was the gift of Mr. Edward W. Moore of Philadelphia. It had an all-wooden body and electric lights—no more carbide to mess with—and was the first car within our Section to be provided with demountable rims. In front of the driving-seat was a steel shield, placed at a deflecting angle as protection against flying shrapnel and it had an improved "locker system." With some slight changes this car was the model adopted thereafter for all the ambulances. After looking it over I felt it must almost be a pleasure to be wounded to have the privilege of riding in such a car.

On the thirtieth of May we received orders to change our base. The Squad was genuinely sorry to leave Méricourt. The village, which had looked so forbidding to us when we had first arrived, through the familiarity of three months' residence had grown

to mean home. The peaceful canal with its graceful poplars where we used to swim, "the campus," the scene on moonlight nights of many a rousing chorus, the lane where the cars were parked, the little café, all held pleasant memories. Here we had endured the rigors of winter, had seen the coming and passing of spring and now as summer was upon us we were leaving.

We left in fleet, about one in the afternoon, and an hour later drew up in the village of Bayonville on the farther side of the Route Nationale. We found it an attractive place, having two squares well shaded with fine trees. In peace times its population probably numbered about four thousand. The town was far enough back of the line to be out of range of field artillery and showed no sign of bombardment. Being only slightly off the main road and about midway between the line and Bayonvillers, the location was a convenient one for us as for the present we were maintaining the same schedules and routes which prevailed at Méricourt. We were assigned quarters in the loft of a brick barn but some of us preferred more airy surroundings and pitched a tent under the trees in a little park in the center of the town, thus establishing the Bayonvillers Country Club. Later because of the arrival of a fleet of *camions,* we moved the club to a meadow on the outskirts of the town. Mess was also established in a tent.

Early in the spring it had become apparent that

something was in the air. Ammunition *dépôts* began to appear, placed just out of gun range; *génie parcs* with enormous quantities of barbed wire, trench flooring and other construction materials were established; a new road was being built from Bray to Cappy; additional aviation fields were laid out and rows of hangars, elaborately painted to represent barns and ploughed fields to deceive the enemy airmen, reared their bulky forms. Back of the line numerous tent hospitals sprang into being. Near Cappy immense siege guns, served by miniature railways, poked their ugly noses through concealing brush screens. Through the fields several new standard gauge tracks made their way. The roads back of any army are always cluttered with supporting traffic and as the spring wore on the traffic on the Somme increased day by day. There were huge five ton *camions* loaded with shells, steam tractors bringing up big guns, caterpillar batteries, armored cars, mobile anti-aircraft guns, stone boats, mobile soup kitchens, oxygen containers to combat poison gas, field artillery, searchlight sections, staff cars, telegraph and telephone wagons, long lines of motor busses now used as meal vans, horse wagons piled high with bread, portable forges, mule trains carrying machine gun ammunition, two-wheeled carts carrying trench mortars. All the transport of war was there until by the first of June the roads back of the Somme front presented a congestion of traffic such as the world has never

before seen. To the most casual observer it could not but be apparent that all this tremendous activity, the enormous supplies, the preparations, were not solely for defensive purposes. It could connote but one thing—an offensive on a great scale.

Directly opposite Cappy, within the German lines, lay the little shell-riddled village of Dompierre. Between the sand bags of the first line trench I had peeped forth at it and as early as April I knew that the village was mined, for the electrician who wired the mine was a friend. I felt sure, therefore, that our section was to be in the offensive when it came. But as to the day of the attack, of course that was a matter of speculation. As the days wore on all the talk was of "the attack." There was no longer any doubt as to the fact that an attack was to be launched; the question now was simply, when. Both the firing and activity in the air had increased. Sometimes for hours at a time there would be continuous drum fire and scarcely an hour passed without a fight between planes.

The opening days of June were wet and sodden. The weather was raw, almost cold, with frequent hail storms so that it was difficult to determine just what season was being observed. The roads, trodden by thousands of hobbed feet and cut by horses' hoofs and by tires, were deep with mud. It was *saletemps*. We found Bayonvillers teeming with troops. But if we thought the place already crowded, it was nothing

compared to the congestion which the succeeding days brought. Day by day, almost hour by hour, the troops continued to come in, Colonials, Chasseurs, the famous Zouaves, the Senegalese, and the sound of drum and bugle scarcely ever died.

The Senegalese were an amusing lot. I have been in Senegal and when in the Congo, had a Senegalese for a headman, so I know a few words of their language. When I hailed them in this they would immediately freeze into ebony statues, then their white teeth would flash in a dazzling smile as they hailed me as a white chief who knew their home. They were armed with deadly bush knives, and for a dash over the top made splendid soldiers. In the trenches, however, they were nearly useless, as artillery fire put fear into their souls. It was said they never took or were taken prisoners and many grewsome tales were current regarding this. Most certainly they must have been useful in night manoeuvres for with that complexion it would be a matter of impossibility to determine which was the Senegalese and which was the night.

The lot upon which the "country club" had been the original and only squatter began to fill. A 155 battery moved in alongside us and several 75 batteries with their ammunition transports became our neighbors; some horse transport convoys also creaked their way in. Horses by the hundred plunged and pulled at restraining ropes or stood with downcast heads—

bone-weary of the struggle. All around us rose the little brown dog tents and at night countless small fires flickered. It was like camping in the midst of a three-ring circus.

We mingled with our neighbors and talked with them, but no matter how the conversation started it was sure to come around to the one, great, all-important subject—the attack. Even for us who were not to be "sent in" but whose duty it would be merely to carry those who had been, the delay and suspense were trying. How much worse then, it must have been for those men who "were going over the top," waiting, waiting, many of them for their chance to greet death. I remember one afternoon talking with a chap who before the war had kept a restaurant in Prince's Street in Edinburgh, a restaurant at which I remember having dined. He was an odd little Frenchman, alert and bright-eyed, and every now and then as he talked he would pat me on the shoulder and exclaim "Oh, my boy." He assured me that very soon now we should see the attack. "Oh, my boy, the world very soon will talk of this place. You will see the name of this village on maps"—a true prophecy, for when the New York papers came to us weeks after the attack had started, I saw a map with Cappy marked upon it. "Soon greater than Verdun we shall see, great things, and oh, my boy, we are here to see them; we are part of them. *C'est magnifique!* but the waiting, the waiting, why can't they

end it? Send us in. *Quant à moi*—I go with the second wave, and if I come out, *après la guerre,* you will come to my place, my place in Prince's Street which you know, and for you I will open the finest champagne of *La belle France* and we will raise our glasses and drink to these days, but oh, my boy, the waiting, *c'est terrible.*"

My journal for these days reflects a feeling of suspense. "Tuesday, June 13th: *on repos* today for which I was thankful, since the rain still continues, with a low temperature. Spent most of the day in my bag reading as being about the only place I could keep warm. The 20th Zouaves marched into town today, their bugles playing. Their arrival and the presence of the Senegalese can mean but one thing: the attack will soon be launched. Well, if it's coming it can't come too soon. This suspense is trying. If this weather continues I will have trench foot again as my shoes are leaking. Firing has been unusually heavy today, and tonight a terrific bombardment is in progress.

"Thursday, June 15th. *Encore* this ghastly weather. More Senegalese coming in until the place looks like a Georgia camp meeting. Three runs today; slow progress working through the traffic. Surely attack cannot be far off. Passed wreck of plane near Villers-Bretonneux which was fired on, falling and burning to death both pilot and driver.

"Sunday, June 18th. To Fontaine-les-Cappy, which

incidentally was being shelled, evacuating to Villers-Bretonneux. Changed rear spring on my bus this afternoon, other having proved too light. Have fixed some hooks and straps on the car so that I can carry blanket roll and dunnage bag in event the line breaks and we follow the advance. "New Number Nine" is ready for attack. Rumor says it will start in three days. Now that the clock has been set ahead—this occurred several days ago—we turn in by daylight."

Dry, hot weather succeeded the rains and in a day the mud of the roads had been beaten into dust. A khaki-colored fog hung over the sinuous line of never-ceasing traffic and choked man and beast. It was trying work driving now but still it was exhilirating, the feeling of being a part of a great push. By the middle of June the advance position from which we should operate from the time the first wave went over the top had been chosen. It was close back of the line near the *boyau* of Fontaine-les-Cappy. It was very much exposed and much in advance of the position usually taken by transport sections, but it appeared the spot of greatest usefulness and this being determined, our C.O. was not the man to question further.

On the morning of June 20th I left for duty at Cappy. My journal for that date reads: "Left quarters at eight this morning, reaching Cappy an hour later, taking on a load, evacuating at once to Villers-Bretonneux. This afternoon evacuated to Chuig-

nolles. So far I have heard but one shell come in today. Our batteries, too, have been singularly quiet. The calm before the storm. If possible, the roads today were more congested than ever with every sort of vehicle from bicycle to steam tractor. It's now nine o'clock, though owing to change of time not nearly dark. Am a bit tired tonight but have small idea of getting much rest." Nor was I disappointed, for throughout the night the wounded came in and we drove almost without pause. From my last evacuation I got back to Cappy about six in the morning, and as our relief was due at eight I did not consider it worth while to turn in. The day promised to be hot and clear. Already the shelling had started. It was a point of honor among the Squad to be prompt in our relief and Gyles and I were therefore surprised when no cars had appeared by eight-thirty. It was about ten o'clock and we had exhausted our conjectures when two cars of a French Section rolled up. We sensed at once that something had happened. One of the drivers climbed down from his car and came over to where we were standing. We exchanged salutes. *"Messieurs,"* he said, "Your Section has been replaced by ours. I am directed to instruct you to report at once at your quarters." The concussion from a 210 could scarcely have stunned us more than the announcement, "Replaced." It was impossible: there must be some mistake. After all our months of work, which we knew had been efficient, after all our prepa-

rations for the attack. Replaced? No, it could not be. We would find out there had been a misunderstanding. In a daze we cranked our cars and drove slowly away from the familiar old *poste*.

Several shells had passed us as we had stood talking, and as I reached the canal bridge I found one had hit there. Beside the road lay a dead man, and three wounded were being dressed. I got out my stretchers and evacuated them to the field hospital at Cérisy. It was my last evacuation from Cappy. I reached quarters about noon, finding the Squad at mess. One glance at the fellows confirmed the morning's news. I have seldom seen a more thoroughly disgusted bunch of men. It was true; we had been replaced and were leaving for parts unknown tomorrow. Somewhere back in Automobile Headquarters in Paris a wire had been pulled and that wire attached to us was to pull us away from the greatest offensive in history. We felt rather bitter about it at first, for we felt that in a way it reflected on our ability or even our nerve, but when we learned that the *Médecin Divisionaire* and even the General of our Division had protested against our removal, had spoken of our work in the highest terms, our disappointment was softened, and so with the philosophy which army life brings we said *"c'est la guerre,"* struck our tents and prepared for the morrow's departure.

CHAPTER VII

THE TREK TO THE VORTEX

IT was a hot, sunshiny morning, the second of June, when at seven o'clock our cars lined up in convoy ready for the start. We had not been told our destination, but somehow the rumor had got about that we were bound for Verdun. The word ran along the line of cars and soon the fellows were sounding their hooters and yelling out "Ye-a-a Verdun" as though it were some summer resort toward which we were headed and not the bloodiest hole in history.

The "Lieut." ran along the line to see that all was ready—the engines were purring—there was a short wait—the whistle sounded and we were under way Down the beautiful shaded road from Bayonville we wound, passing the replacing section, passed a 155 battery and then out upon the Route Nationale. Over the road on which we had driven through rain and snow at every hour of the day and night, where every stone and bump was familiar, we passed for the last time. Down through La Motte, squirming through the dense mass of traffic until we reached Bayonvillers, the scene of so many evacuations, then straight on till

we reached the outskirts of Amiens. Here we made our first stop in order to re-form the convoy. When traveling thus in convoy each car has its designated place, taking its position in the line in order of numbers and it was forbidden any car to pass the one in front of it so long as that car was rolling. Before this rule was adopted a move in convoy was simply one, grand road race, every car doing its best to pass every car in front of it and attain the lead, a fine imitation of the chariot race from "Ben Hur." When a puncture or blow-out occurred, the car drew up alongside the road and the driver worked frantically to get a new shoe on and overtake the convoy at its next stop. Meanwhile the convoy went on, the drivers leaning out with a "Carry on, old man, hard luck." At the rear of the convoy, driven by one of the mechanics, came the repair car and when an ambulance was forced to drop out of line because of engine trouble or breakage, this car stopped with it, made the repairs and then the two came on after the convoy. Under this system, though all the cars might not come in at a rendezvous simultaneously, the laggards always had the *atelier* with them. At the head of the convoy, setting the pace, drove the "Lieut." while the Chief either brought up the rear or horned on the flanks keeping a watchful eye on the fleet. Everybody, even perhaps the mechanics and some of the mascots, enjoyed a move in convoy. Of the latter we had at various times a sheep named "Mrs.

Cæsar," a rooster, two cats, a fox and numerous dogs. Mrs. Cæsar in particular, possessed strong views on the matter of riding in an ambulance, and with the perversity of her sex usually insisted on "making a scene" before she would consent to become a passenger.

To the dogs, however, and especially to Vic, convoy life held great appeal as there were limitless possibilities for getting in the way and no end of new things at which to bark.

We did not enter Amiens, the C.O. having a penchant for avoiding cities when the Squad was en masse, but turned off on the Montdidier road, at which town we lunched about one. By two-thirty we were again en route, passing through Pont Ste. Maxence, which we had last seen in January. Under the smiling influence of summer, it looked quite a different place and we scarcely recognized the little park where we had stood guard over the cars on those bleak winter nights. We went on to Senlis, now a crumbling example of German rapacity, where blackened walls frowned grimly down on us as we rolled by. Throughout the afternoon we drove through choking clouds of dust, passing through La Chapelle and Fontenay and at seven in the evening reached the quaint little city of Ecouen. Here we stopped for the night, having come one hundred and fifty kilometers.

The convoy had drawn up along the main street and at a nearby café we had dinner. For quarters we

were assigned military billets in different private houses throughout the town. At Ecouen we were only eighteen kilometers from Paris—we had sighted the Eiffel Tower on our way in. Many a longing glance was turned in the direction of the city as the Squad thought of their *marraines,* the lighted restaurants and teeming boulevards, but, so far as our chances of getting into Paris were concerned, it might as well have been within the enemy lines. So after a stroll about the quiet, rambling streets of the town, everyone sought quarters in anticipation of a hard drive on the morrow.

We turned out at six next morning and after coffee and bread, got away as the city clock boomed the hour of seven. Our way lead us through picturesque little towns to Meaux which we reached some four hours after starting. Then on down through the beautiful valley of the Marne we passed, through quaint, slumbering, little villages where ancient men dozing in the summer sun, gazed at us through glazed querulous eyes, where chubby children rushed to the doors to crow with wild-eyed joy, and buxom girls nearly caused us to ditch our cars by waving a friendly hand. Down through the beautiful sun-lit valley where grow the grapes which give bottled joy to the world, we rolled under shady rows of trees, across moss-grown stone bridges, by ancient grey church towers and crumbling walls, until about one o'clock we entered the wide peaceful streets of

Chateau Thierry. War seemed very far away.

We shook off some of the dust which fairly encased us and sought the cool interior of a café. There we were not long to be at ease, however, for that night's destination, Chalôns, was still many a kilometer away. In an hour the whistle blew and we were off. Still following the Marne Valley, we held a good pace through Dormans to Epernay due south from Reims, and at five o'clock made an anchorage in the city of Chalôns. Here we went into camp beside the river, pitching a tent by the lock, and then every one went in swimming. After the choking dust through which we had been driving, the water was a tremendous treat.

The third day of the trek was, in a way, to be the most interesting of all. Our *ordre de mouvement* read: "Chalôns, Trois Fontaines, Sermaize, Vevey le Grand, Pargny, St. Dizier, Bar-le-Duc." We were passing through the field of the Battle of the Marne.

Owing to the necessity of replenishing our gas supply we got away rather late. At Trois Fontaines, the seat of Count Fontenoy, we halted and viewed one of the most beautiful and picturesque ruins in France, the ancient abbey dating from the fifth century. The wonderful, vine-clad walls, shadowed by the graceful trees which grew within and about the edifice made a singularly restful picture. From Trois Fontaines we passed on to Sermaize or rather what once was Sermaize. Here, too, were ruins but no

softening influence of time blurred their harsh outlines; no vines and trees hid their harsh ugliness. They stood out in all their pitiful nakedness, the wrecks of homes—the completed product of the Hun. Through other deserted towns and villages we passed along the withering trail of the Vandae where the German first established that reputation for cruelty and rapacity which shall be his and the heritage of his children for generations to come.

At noon we lunched at the cheery town of St. Dizier, parking in the main square. We enjoyed the noonings; there was relaxation, relief from the wheel, cheery talk and chaff as we gathered around the board, the relating of the morning's adventure and speculation as to what the afternoon would develop, and afterwards a soothing pipe as we drank our coffee. Then the preliminary whistle would sound, we would swarm to our cars and assure ourselves they were ready—sad news for the man who discovered a flat tire at this time—another blast and the engines would throb and the convoy wind its way out while the curb would be lined with people watching our passage and waving us a friendly hand.

At four that afternoon, Saturday, June twenty-fourth, we reached the city of Bar-le-Duc and halted in a side street while the Lieutenant repaired to the État-Major for orders. The first thing we noticed was that practically every building bore a placard with the legend, "Cave woûtée—personnes," and around

each cellar window were piled sandbags. What the signs meant was that beneath the buildings upon which they appeared, was a cellar capable of sheltering the number of persons indicated. The reason for their being was that Bar-le-Duc was a city likely at any minute to be bombed by an enemy air fleet. Already this had occurred a number of times and many people had been killed or wounded. Wrecked buildings around the city showed where the bombs had struck.

We left our cars, walked down to the corner and turned into the main street. At the farther end, at the point where the street forked, stood a transparency. In large black letters, below which was a directing arrow, appeared a single word—Verdun. Even as we paused in silence to gaze upon that mystic sign there came the growl and rumble of distant heavy guns—the guns of Verdun.

Whatever may have been the aspect of Bar-le-Duc in normal times, now it impressed me as a city utterly weary, a city sapped of vitality. As a weary man, exhausted by constant strain and tension to a condition of listless indifference—thus did Bar-le-Duc impress me. And well might it be weary. For months troops had poured through its streets, men of a score of races, men from far countries and from the heart of France. Here they had passed on their way to the Vortex and through these streets the bleeding wrecks of the same men had been borne back. Day and night without ceasing the munition *camions* had

rumbled by. While winter ended, spring came and passed, and summer blossomed, the thundering guns had not ceased to sound. For five months this unrelenting strain had endured and Bar-le-Duc was like a weary soul.

The Lieutenant having received his orders, the signal was given to take the wheel and we climbed rather wearily into our seats. Some five kilometers beyond the city we came to a cluster of buildings—the village of Véil—and here in an open field we drew up our cars. Of the twenty-one ambulances which had started for the Somme, twenty had arrived. All of the auxiliary cars, with the exception of the repair car which was back with the missing ambulance, had also come through. In the last three days we had covered over four hundred kilometers. As convoy driving involves considerable strain we were all rather tired. Rain had set in but we were too weary to pitch a tent. Everyone cleared a place in his car and turned into his blankets glad of the prospect of a night's repose.

It was close to midnight, and "dark as the inside of a cow," when the camp was startled into wakefulness by the cry "Show a leg; everybody out, we're called." Outside the rain beat against the cars and a mournful wind slapped the branches overhead. It was a painful transition from the warm comfort of the blankets to the raw chill of the night but no one hesitated. Lanterns began to flicker; figures struggling into tunic

and knickers tumbled out of cars; objects were pulled forth and piled on the ground, bedding was thrown under ground-sheets. Stretchers shot into places. Engines began to cough and snort, and searchlights pierced the night. The C.O., moving from car to car, issued the order, "In convoy order; gas masks and helmets. Head-lights till further orders." In twenty minutes after the first call, every car was ready, every man in his place, and the convoy formed. "Where are we going?" was the inquiry which shot from car to car and, though no one knew, the answer was invariably "Verdun."

Presently the whistle blew and we moved out. Down through the sleeping city of Bar-le-Duc we went and there where the transparency blazoned the legend "Verdun" we obeyed the silent injunction of the pointing arrow and turned to the left. We passed through the outskirts of the city and presently entered upon a broad, pitted road. Well might the road be pitted, for there was the Voie Sacré—the Sacred Way—over which had passed every division of the French Army, the way over which thousands of the men of France had passed never to return.

Beyond question one reason why Verdun was chosen by the Germans as the point against which their great offensive was launched was the weakness of the supporting railroad facilities. Normally the city is served by two lines of railways, one running north from St. Mihiel, the other coming in from the west by Ste.

Menehould. Since St. Mihiel was in their hands, the first road was eliminated and though the second was not in the enemy's hands it was commanded by his batteries. This left the position of Verdun without supporting railroads, heretofore considered necessary for maintaining an army. But the Hun had reckoned without two things, the wonderful organization of the French motor transport, and the Voie Sacré. Never had a road been called upon to bear the burdens which now were thrown upon this way. An armada of ten thousand motor *camions* was launched, and day and night in two unbroken lines this fleet held its course and served the defending armies of Verdun.

Now we, too, passed down the road, privileged to become part of that support.

A half-moon, blood-red as though it, too, had taken on the hue of war, appeared in the broken sky, described a half arc and disappeared. Once a tremendous light illuminated the whole northern sky. Possibly it was the explosion of a mine. We never knew what. The noise of the guns grew louder as we went on. The gray fore-tone of dawn was streaking the east when we halted by a group of tents at the roadside. We were beyond Lemmes, someone said, but this meant nothing to us. It was a field hospital and here we found our men, a hundred of them. They were all gas victims as their wracking, painful coughs indicated.

The rain had ceased. The sun rose and warmed

things a bit. It was seven o'clock in the morning and Bar-le-Duc was beginning to stir itself for another weary day as we reached the evacuation hospital. Three-quarters of an hour later we straggled into Véil, having covered over a hundred kilometers since midnight.

After the hard rolling of the last few days there was much to be done about the cars. Bolts needed tightening, grease cups had to be filled and many minor repairs were to be made. This consumed most of the day and with only a couple of hours' sleep to our credit from the night before, we were genuinely tired when we rolled into our blankets that night and fervently hoped for an undisturbed rest.

But such was not to be our fortune. At two-thirty in the morning it came—the call. In the gray of dawn we wound through Bar-le-Duc. In the doorways and on street benches we could just discern the motionless forms of soldiers wrapped in chilly slumber. Once more we turned out upon the Sacred Way. Our destination was the village of Dugny, of which I shall have more to say later,—perhaps seven kilometers from Verdun. A blowout just beyond Bar-le-Duc lost me the convoy, which in turn lost me the road, and I wandered through a series of half demolished villages, not knowing how near I might be to the line, before I finally again emerged on the Voie Sacré and reached Dugny. Here I was surprised to see another Section of the American Ambulance.

It proved to be Section Eight which we were shortly to replace.

We found the driving station at Dugny overflowing with wounded and the men placed in rows on straw in a stable. Again we filled our cars, this time mostly with *couchés,* as before, gas victims. It was now broad daylight. The roadway even at night was a mass of traffic, mostly convoys of heavy *camions.* These followed each other in an endless belt, the loaded ones coming toward Verdun, the unloaded going away. They proceeded at an average speed of eighteen kilometers an hour at a distance of sixty feet from each other. It became necessary for us if we were to make any progress at all, to squirm our way through the maze, continually dodging in and out of the convoys to avoid staff cars, yet always working by the slower moving vehicles. It was the most trying kind of driving and required extreme care lest our cars be crushed beneath the giant munition trucks or lest the unforgivable sin of causing a block be committed. It was disheartening to work by a convoy of eighty *camions,* dodging in and out to avoid cars coming in the opposite direction, and then just as the head of the line was reached to have a tire go bang. It is such happenings that try the soul of the *ambulancier.*

Not till two o'clock in the afternoon did we reach Véil, having completed the evacuation, and get our first meal of the day. We were content to rest the remainder of the day and the day following, doing

only such work as the cars required, and we were very glad that no demand came for our services. On the third morning a number of us secured permission to go into Bar-le-Duc in the "chow" *camion*. We had just completed a hot bath and were making for a pâtisserie when the Lieutenant's car came up. "Get everybody together," he shouted, "we're leaving for Verdun at one o'clock."

At camp we found the tents already struck and a cold *singe* (tinned meat) lunch awaiting us. Promptly at one we formed in convoy and again headed for the Sacred Way. At four o'clock that afternoon we reached the village of Dugny. This was the twenty-eighth of June. The trek from the Somme to Verdun was finished.

CHAPTER VIII

THE VORTEX

LOOKING at any of the maps of the Verdun battle front you will observe a dot near the left banks of the Meuse directly south of the city. It is the village of Dugny, on a direct line perhaps five kilometers from Verdun. The village consists of one long, rambling street, in dry weather fetlock-deep in dust, which the rain converts to a clinging, pasty mud. At the farther end of the street, where it bends northward toward Bellray, stands a square towered stone church. The village lies in a hollow, a hill formerly crowned with a fort rising steeply between it and Verdun. To the south the country spreads out flat for some kilometers—the valley of the Meuse—to a range of hills. It was to these hills the Germans expected to force the French retirement once the city was taken. Between Dugny and the hill directly to the north ran a narrow-gauge railroad, and daily during our occupancy the enemy searched this road with 130s. These bombardments usually took place around two in the afternoon and at that hour it was considered unsalubrious to adventure up the Verdun road which skirted

the hill at this point. The hill, itself, was cratered with enormous holes where 380s had landed. Some idea of the tremendous force of modern H-E shells could be had by viewing these holes, each capacious enough to hold half a dozen of our cars and with blocks of clay as large as single cars tossed about like so many pebbles.

At Dugny our cantonment was, I think, the most uncomfortable I have ever experienced. We were assigned a good-sized barn about midway down the village street. The building was divided by a wide passage one side of which during our stay was carpeted with straw, upon which, were placed rows of gas victims. On either side of this passage raised about twelve feet from the ground, were platforms, presumably intended for the storage of hay. On these platforms, access to which was had by a ladder, we slept—or rather were supposed to sleep, it being largely a matter of theory. In the spaces beneath the platform were stabled horses. In a room next to the horses was established the kitchen, a thoughtful arrangement whereby an unfailing supply of flies was secured. Diagonally opposite the kitchen, under one of the platforms, was the *bureau* and for want of other quarters the *atelier* was set up in the passage way. The mess tent was in a small yard just at the rear of the barn. What with the stamping of the horses, the forging and pounding of the *atelier*, the coming and going in the *bureau*, the coughing and

moaning of the gassed men, the roar of the guns and the rumbling of the traffic passing just outside the entrance, compared to our cantonment a boiler factory would have been a haven of quiet. Though our cars were parked flush with the road I preferred mine as a *chambre à coucher* to the stable, and whenever there was opportunity for sleep, which was not very often during our stay at Dugny, I occupied this blood-stained booth.

Our principal *poste* was Cabaret. It is a festive name and certainly there was always under way a "continuous performance." Cabaret was nothing more than a large stone barn. It was situated some two kilometers up the Etain road beyond Verdun and hence on the east side of the Meuse. Here the wounded were brought in on stretchers from the shell craters which formed the line. Their dressings were adjusted and from here we carried them to the dressing station in the stone church at Dugny.

All around the building were stationed batteries. In the field back of it they stood almost wheel to wheel. To the right and to the left and across from it they were placed. All along the Etain road they ranged. Within a few kilometers of the front at the time, there were said to be concentrated more than five thousand pieces of artillery. These guns were continuously in action. They were continuously searched for by the enemy's guns. The resulting cataclysm is beyond description. Once in northern

Ontario I encountered an old Scotchman whom I quizzed regarding some rapids I contemplated shooting. "Mon," he replied, "they're pr-rodugious, extraordinaire." Such was the gunfire of Verdun "pr-rodugious, extraordinaire."

Besides the *poste* at Cabaret, we nightly dispatched one car to Fort de Tavanne and one car to the Moulainville-Etain Cross roads, the latter a particularly ghastly place strongly recalling Bairnsfather's cartoon, "Dirty work at the cross roads." Our directions for finding the place were "to go to the fifth smell beyond Verdun,"—directions inspired by the group of rotting horse carcasses which were scattered along the way. These comprised our regular runs. In addition we were subject to special calls to Fort Fiat, to Bellray and to Fort Belrupt. At first our schedules called for one car every ninety minutes to leave Dugny for Cabaret. This was found to be insufficient and soon the intervals were shortened to sixty, then to forty-five, and finally to thirty minutes. At times the wounded came in so fast that all pre tense of a schedule was abandoned, a car returning at once to the *poste* after having evacuated to Dugny. To facilitate matters the Squad was divided into two sections of ten cars each and each of these sections was again divided. It was hoped by the arrangement that a man would be able to get one full night's rest out of three and sufficient day *repos* to keep him fit.

We had, as I have said, reached Dugny late in the afternoon of the twenty-eighth. There was not much time wasted in turning over the sector to us, for at seven o'clock the following morning we went into action. The order of rollings posted in the *bureau* showed I was scheduled to leave for Cabaret at ten-thirty. There were two routes leading to the *poste,* one by the way of the village of Bellray, thence over a hill skirting the city, through a wood and out upon the Etain road. This route circumnavigated the city. The alternative route led directly north from Dugny, passing into Verdun by the Neuf Porte, thence on through the city following the river and across a bridge near the Porte Chaussée, through which egress was had to the Faubourg Pavé around "dead man's corner" to the Etain road. The first of the two routes was considered the quieter. I had misgivings that this was but a comparative term, but being by nature of a reposeful disposition I determined that my first run, at least should be by the Bellray route.

The entrance to Bellray village is had over a narrow wooden bridge spanning marshy ground. The ground on both sides was pocked with shell holes, some not six feet from the bridge and none farther than fifty yards. Considering that the guns which fired these shells were at least six kilometers away on the other side of a range of hills, this might be considered reasonably accurate shooting. Just beyond the bridge the road turns sharply to the left, making a

steep ascent and comes out to the east of the city, passing by several barracks or *casernes*. It was at this point that the whole fury of the bombardment broke on one. Even when we had learned to expect it and steeled our nerves accordingly, it came as a shock—a roaring wave of noise from the inferno below. Down past the *casernes* the road dipped to the left and entered the woods. The trees were shattered and stripped of limbs as though by countless bolts of lightning, and the ground beneath was ploughed by shell fire and sown with shrapnel. Emerging from the woods on to the Etain road the course for some distance was bordered with houses, the outskirts of Verdun. There was not a house but showed the effect of bombardment and some had been reduced to heaps of débris. From here on the buildings became less frequent and both sides of the road, to the east in the open field, on the west, under the protection of a small rise of ground, the batteries stood and belched forth their hate. The ground shook with the reverberation and overhead the air whined and screeched. Down this corridor of hell the road made its way to Cabaret. When I reached Cabaret on that first trip, the sweat was standing out on my face as though I had been through a great agony and my hands were aching with the grip on the wheel. "If this be the quieter route," I thought, "what in the name of Mars must the other be?"

They did not happen to be shelling Cabaret and

as my wounded were ready I was soon on my way back. Near the *casernes* I noticed the bodies of two horses killed by a shell since I had passed on the out trip. Reaching the driving-station at Dugny, I helped unload my *blessés* and then went into the church. The pews had been removed save a few placed along for *assis*. A row of stretchers flanked the wall. From above, a dim religious light filtered down through the stained glass windows upon the bandaged forms below. The altar was still intact and the images of saints adorned the walls. One corner was roughly screened and curtained, enclosing the emergency operating-room where cases too urgent to permit of delay were put under the knife. There was no confusion and the place was singularly quiet.

At three in the afternoon came my second call for Cabaret. As in the morning I chose the Bellray route. The firing had let up somewhat, though things were scarcely tranquil, and in the field back of the *poste* shells were breaking. As I came through the woods on my way back the enemy was searching there with 155s, hunting for hidden batteries. I saw three shells burst within seventy-five meters of the road, one piece of *éclat* passing through the car body. As I bore along I could hear many of the shells coming in. This trip shattered all my confidence in the Bellray route and thereafter I went by way of the city.

It was on the following day I received a call to Fort Fillat, one of the outlying defenses of Verdun.

My knowledge of its location or of what a fort should look like was of the vaguest.

Fort Fillat was, or rather had been located on the crest of a hill. The entire region round about Verdun had a seared, desolate look, but this hill was, I think, the most despairing spot I have ever seen. The lawn slope had been clothed with trees. Now, none but a few shattered stumps remained. The way up was strewn with wrecked *camions,* tumbrils, shell cases and scattered equipment and the air was fetid with the stench of rotting carcasses. Below in the valley the guns thundered and roared, and directly opposite, Fleury was in the throes of a terrible bombardment. Having passed beyond the Fort without realizing it, I found my way—I cannot call it a road—impassable because of shell craters. I noticed with considerable interest that while some of these craters were old, being half-filled with water, others apparently were of very recent make. I descended from my car in an endeavor to find a way through, and the enemy chose this opportune time to shell the hill. It was then I performed a feat which for years I had essayed in the gymnasium without success—the feat of falling on the face without extending the arms to break the fall. Whether it was the concussion of the shell which blew me over, or whether I really did accomplish the stunt unaided, I am unable to say. At all events I found myself flat on the ground, my head swimming from the explosion, and a cloud of

dust above me. My first impression—that this was a particularly unhealthy spot—here found confirmation. I managed to get my car turned and made my way back to where I had noticed a crumbling wall. A head appeared from beneath the stones and a *brancardier* crawled out of a subterranean passage. It was Fort Fillat.

It was two-fifteen in the morning when my next call for Cabaret came. There were two cars of us and I followed the other, for the first time passing through Verdun. It was intensely dark, too dark to see anything save when the gun flashes gave a flickering glimpse of a shattered wall. Along the Etain Road the firing was furious. So many guns were in action that, at times, there was an almost unbroken line of flame. In the day-time the run was bad enough but nothing to be compared with this.

It was on my return from the second trip that night that I got my first view of Verdun. The firing had slackened. Day had come and the sun, rising a golden ball, swept the smoke-masked valley and touched the shattered towns and walls. Though it was a landscape of desolation, of demolished homes and wrecked fortunes, it was not a picture of despair: rather it was a picture of great travail nobly endured, a symbol of France assailed but unbeaten.

It is impossible for me to give any consecutive narrative or account of those days we served in the Vortex. The communiqués show there were attacks

and counter attacks, that the French took ground, lost it and retook it, that gas wave after gas wave came over, that "the fighting in the Verdun sector continues heavy." All this meant we worked without thought of schedule, with little sleep and without regard to time. Now and then we ate, more from habit than because we were hungry, but when we were not rolling we did not rest; we could not, the agitation of unrest so permeated the very air. "How does it go?" we would ask our *blessés*. *."Ah, monsieur, nous nous retirons,"* one would answer. Would the city fall? But soon we would be reassured, for the next man, his fighting eye gleaming from beneath a bloody bandage would affirm: *"Ils ne passeront pas; on les aura"* (They shall not pass; we will have them). And so I say, I can give no very clear account of those days. My journal does not help much. It is disconnected, jerky and without proposition. Certain incidents and pictures there are, however, which stand out in my memory as sharply pricked as the flash of a machine gun on a pitchy night. I remember one morning very early as I rounded "dead man's corner" en route to the *poste,* encountering Mac returning and that he leaned out and shouted: "Be careful, they are shelling the road ahead," and that I proceeded on my way, half-dead for want of sleep, wondering dully how a chap was to "be careful."

I remember a night when, the road blocked, I was forced to make a détour through the woods, I ran into

a tangle of horses and caissons thrown into confusion by a shell, and I recall that I flashed my torch for an instant and it fell full on the face of a dead man who lay square in the center of the road, a gaping hole in his head. I remember that first dawn in Verdun and yet another dawn when I went down the Etain road as the French were drawing a *tire de barrage,* and passed just inside our batteries and just outside the enemy's curtain fire on the hill above. Clearer than all, I remember one scene at Cabaret. It was close to midnight after a hot, muggy day. There was a change of Divisions and within the stone barn there must have been about a hundred and fifty men. The outgoing surgeons were consulting with those just arrived. The departing *brancardiers* were awaiting the order to move, while those of the incoming division were moving about, storing their packs preparatory to leaving for the line. Around the walls lay the wounded. A single calcium light threw a white glow on everything, sharply marking the shadows. The door was draped with a blanket, as were the shell-holes in the walls, and the air was close and foul with the war smell, that compound of anæsthetics, blood and unwashed bodies. Outside, for the moment, the batteries were silent and within, the hum of voices was distinctly audible. And then, suddenly, as though every man were stricken dumb, the silence fell, silence save for the whirring screech of a shell. It seemed hours in coming. Something told

us it would strike very close, perhaps within. As though mowed down, we had dropped on our faces. Then it burst—just beyond the wall. *Éclat* tore gaps in the door drapings, and whined spitefully across the room, raining against the wall, one hitting my casque. *"Le luminaire, le luminaire,"* shouted a voice and the light was dashed out. There we lay—a mixed mass of arms and legs—lay and waited for other shells. But no more came and presently we were up and the place roused into activity.

At eight o'clock on the morning of Wednesday, July twelfth, we came off duty in the Verdun sector, completing fourteen days of service, at that time, I believe, a record, as ambulance sections were not supposed to serve more than ten days consecutively in this sector. We were relieved by a French Section. This relieving Section had, before we left Dugny, in its one day of service lost two men, one gassed, the other killed by a shell. Though we had had six cars hit, one almost demolished, we had not lost a man nor had one injured. American luck!

The remainder of the twelfth we loaded our cars and got everything ready for departure. We were glad enough at the prospect of getting away from Dugny. It had been an uncomfortable fortnight with much rain, broken by hot, searing days. Our quarters were now shared with gas victims, the poor chaps coughing almost continuously. We were all feeling

the need of sleep but it was impossible to rest amidst our surroundings.

We were up at five next morning and by eight the convoy was formed. In a drizzling rain we pulled out through Dugny's one street and proceeding by a circuitous route amid the traffic of the Voie Sacré we finally reached "Bar." We did not stop here but pushed on for some eight kilometers beyond and drew up at a village. As we climbed down from the cars the voices of the guns came to us only as a faint rumble, for the Vortex was some fifty kilometers away.

CHAPTER IX

Repos

THE village at which the convoy had halted was Tannois. We shall not soon forget Tannois. Not that there is anything remarkable about it, for it is just the ordinary, uninteresting French provincial village with an unpretentious inn, a few *épiceries,* and some stolid-looking stone houses, but we shall remember it for the peace and calm it brought us. We did not linger long in the village proper but passed through and entered a little valley just beyond. It was a beautiful spot. On either side and at the far end were green-clad hills, and down through the valley flowed a clear, sparkling spring. Sweet-smelling hay carpeted the ground and poppies and wild flowers were scattered everywhere. Beneath a row of trees whose protecting branches offered pleasing shade we parked. The whole environment was one of peace and restfulness and after the inferno we had just left we were in a mood to appreciate the change. We were content to lie on our backs and gaze at the hills and listen to the trickling of the brook.

But we were not destined to remain long at Tan-

nois, for on the night of the sixteenth orders came in and the following day we moved. As usual we went through Bar-le-Duc without stopping and proceeding by way of Méricourt and a number of half-demolished villages, in mid-afternoon reached our destination, Givry-en-Argonne. Givry is one of those sad little towns which make one wonder why the French, being a kind-hearted people, permit it to linger and suffer. Its dirty main street opens into a sad little square where dejected buildings face each other in an attitude of hopeless boredom. Even the ubiquitous cafés seem burdened with ennui. It required but one look at our cantonment, a buggy-looking stable, to convince us that we should prefer our cars as sleeping quarters. These we parked on two vacant lots by the side of the main road where the dust from passing traffic swept over them. We messed in a commandeered private residence and I remember we had especially good food while at Givry. Though nominally *en repos,* the Squad did a certain amount of work, the evacuation of *malades* or an occasional *blessé,* the victim of hand grenade practise, and in this way saw considerable of the surrounding country.

In the French Army, each automobile section has some distinguishing emblem painted on its cars, a stork, a Pierrot, a ballet dancer, some symbol as a sort of trade mark as it were. Among the Squad's French contingent was a man who in civil life was a distinguished painter. He now designed a splendid

Indian head, resplendent with feathers, and this was adopted as the Squad's mark and was emblazoned on the sides and back of each car. This head at once caught the fancy of the *poilu*. It soon made the Section well known and thereafter wherever we were, we were hailed as Les Peaux Rouges—the red skins. Incidentally this decoration started an epidemic of car painting and with the war-gray paint nearly every car was freshened. Poor old "Ting" suffered the hardest luck when, after laboring all day, covering his car and himself with paint, perspiration and profanity, we received orders to move, the roads at the time being ankle deep in dust.

We left Givry without regret and after an uneventful roll of twenty kilometers, we hove to at the village of Triaucourt. Just outside Triaucourt is a pretentious villa, the property of M. Poincaré, the brother of the President of France. It was at the villa that the Crown Prince stayed before the Germans were swept back. It is situated in its own beautiful grounds, or rather park. To the left of the house, as it faces the road, is a large open sward, along one side of which flows a small stream, the headwaters of the Aisne. All around are groups of trees. In this beautiful spot, through the courtesy of the authorities, we were permitted to park our cars. They were aligned in two rows facing each other and about sixty feet apart. The mess tent was pitched in a magnificent grove of pines at one end of the cars, and the C.O.'s and a

During Heavy Engagements the Stretcher Bearers Eat When and Where They Can

sleeping tent in another grove on a small rise of ground. Never had we had such an ideal cantonment.

Triaucourt itself we found to be not entirely without interest. It possessed a church of some architectural pretensions which bore the marks of war, for the Germans in their first advance had shelled the place rather thoroughly. The church contains one picture said to be a genuine Van Dyck. Certainly it was dingy enough to be. From the back of the church extends a row of ruins the length of two city blocks, another token of the passing of the Huns. There were the usual cafés and *épiceries* and several field hospitals.

Those were pleasant days we spent at Triaucourt. We were forty kilometers back of the line; our Division was *en repos,* reforming, so there were no wounded. Occasionally we would receive a call to transport a *malade* from one hospital to another. On such duty I went several times to Revigny or rather what was left of the town. Whole blocks lay in ruins presenting a picture of desolation such as only war—the war of the Hun—is capable of producing. At Le Roi, not far from Revigny, lay the gigantic frame of the Zeppelin brought down some months before.

But for the most part our days were of idle dalliance. Beautiful weather prevailed. We sat in our cars chatting or reading or lolled about on the grass. In the later afternoon we used to pair off and go for long walks about the country. A series of soccer

matches was arranged and played between a team made up from the Squad and a team from the Division. Considering that our opponents had six thousand men from whom to draw and we were but twenty-one and not familiar with the game, we did remarkably well for, while we were never victorious neither were we ever blanked and once we tied. They were good sportsmen—the French—and always applauded when we made a good play and cheered at the end of every match.

Of course we had a baseball and bat—were there a score of Americans in any part of the earth that the makings for the national game were not forthcoming? Our scrub games attracted an enormous amount of attention and created great speculation and interest. At times the gallery exceeded a thousand *poilus* and a score or more of officers. Once or twice an officer joined in, holding his hands wide apart, and when a hot grounder burned his palms a great shout of joy would rise from the spectators.

There seemed something in the air 'round about Triaucourt that was particularly salubrious to the raising of dogs; not dogs of any one kind or breed, or in fact of any recognized kind or breed, but, nevertheless, in the general acceptation of the term, dogs. This condition prevailing, it occurred to some inspired soul, to take advantage of the material thus provided by the gods, and hold a bench show, each *ambulancier* being entitled to one entry. The idea

was received with enthusiasm, and thereafter in the by-ways of Triaucourt might be seen khaki-clad figures holding forth a morsel of meat in one hand, the other concealing behind their backs a piece of rope, the while cajoling the prospective canine victims with supposedly soothing terms of mixed French and English. The result was as astonishing a collection of animals as was ever gathered outside the precincts of a museum. And when they all got to howling and yowling and yapping, the ensemble was truly magnificent. The prize was eventually awarded to a weird-looking animal with quaint legs, an abortive tail and of an indescribable greenish hue. The decision of the judges was contested by the disappointed proprietor of another entry on the ground that the animal awarded the prize was not a dog at all, a protest, however, which was disallowed.

In the reaction from the strain of front line work there was an effervescence of spirits which found expression in pranks as well as sports. One favorite diversion was the morning "evacuation." The Squad was supposed to turn out at seven and to report for coffee at seven-thirty. There were usually several recalcitrant risers and it was the self-constituted duty, or I should say pleasure, of the early risers to "evacuate" such cases. Silently "the committee" would proceed to the car of the *évacué;* two "members" would carefully grasp the projecting handles of the stretcher upon which the unconscious victim

was sleeping; then, at a given signal the stretcher would be shot out of the car, the other end grasped by the remaining committeemen, hoisted shoulder high and in a second the *évacué* would find himself torn from the arms of Morpheus and traveling at a high rate of speed towards the center of the town. Here he was deposited in a prominent place, preferably the middle of the square, and immediately he would become what the society people would term the "cynosure of all eyes." Ancient dames, children, dogs, wandering *poilus* and *"le population civile"* would crowd wonderingly about. There would be many ejaculations of *"Qu'est-ce que c'est"* and *"Qu'est-ce qu'il y a,"* whereupon "the committee" in furtherance of its duties would spread the rumor that the occupant of the stretcher was a *contagieux*. After a reasonable period—though it could hardly be thus defined by the victim, he would be again hoisted aloft and borne solemnly back to camp to the whistled strains of the dirge.

While at Triaucourt three new recruits joined us, replacing men whose enlistments had expired. A "new man" was always treated with distant courtesy and called formally by his last name until such time as he might be proved, which might be a matter of days or weeks or, perhaps, never. Certain privileges, however, he always had. For one thing, he was invariably "permitted to subscribe" to the Bulletin des Armées, paying therefore ten francs. Inasmuch as this

journal, the official army paper, was furnished free to every enlisted man, "the subscriber" could not be heard to say that he did not receive his paper. Then, too, a recruit was liable to be "sold" a gas mask and helmet, both of which are furnished free by the army in any desired numbers. The money obtained from these activities, was devoted to the purchase of *gateaux* for the table which, when served, were announced as "the gift" of the new man. Whereupon he realized, perhaps for the first time, that in the words of the song, he was "in the army now." New men were apt to be confused by the talk, for the Squad possessed a vocabulary and language all its own. Everything was either "good news" or "bad news" depending on how it struck the Squad. Anything incredible of belief was "a lota." If a man died he "huffed" or "passed." A helmet was a "trench derby," a gas mask, "a muffler." A friend was "Mon Vieux," furlough was "perm." The mess was referred to as "chow," beans were known as "dum-dums." Salt was "doosel" A car was a "buss," a "peanut roaster" was a "Rolls-Royce." Wine was "ink" and the cook "the Zouave." A dug-out was "a rathskeller," shell fire was "heaving eggs;" "be careful" was "mind your eye, Judge." Of nick names there was no end. "Breakbands," "Sparkplugs," "Wilkins," "Doc," "Sample," "Slack," "Betty," "Skinnay," "Silent," "Claxson" were all real characters. The Squad, too, had its favorite songs, among which were

"Ephriam Brown, the Sailor," "Here's to the Land," "Mary Ann McCarty,' "How Well I Remember the Days of '49," "There Was An Old Man Named Bill," "Here Lies the Body of a Cigarette Fiend," "When I Die," "The Kaiser Has No Hair At All," "She Wore It For a Lover Who Was Far, Far away." Through many a weary wait and in many a queer place have these choruses rolled forth their cheer.

On the twenty-fifth of July we received word that the Section, as a section, had been cited to the Order of the Division for its work at Verdun. The day following we were paraded. The Médecin Divisionaire appeared with his aide. The Citation was read and the Cross of War pinned to one of our battered ambulances, symbolizing the Decoration of the Section.

The citation follows:

2e Armée
Direction du Service
de Santé du Groupement E

Extrait d'Ordre No. 78

En éxécution des prescriptions réglementaires, le Directeur du Service de Santé du 6 e Corps d'Armée cite a l'ordre du service de Santé le Corps d'Armée.

La Section Sanitaire Automobile Américaine No. 1

Sous la Direction du Lieutenant de Kersauson de Permemdreff et des Officiers Américains Herbert Townsend et Victor White,

La Section Sanitaire Américaine
No. 1

a assuré remarquablement le service quotidien des évacuations en allant chercher le blessés le plus loin possible malgré un bombardement parfois violent. C'est particulierement distingûé le 11 Juillet 1916 en traversant à plusieurs reprises une nappe de gaz toxiqués sous un feu intense sans aucun repel pendant 32 heures pour emmener au plus vite aux Ambulances les intoxiqués.

Q. G. le 26 Juillet 1916
Le Directeur du Service de Santé
Seal.
J. Toubert

Délivré copie du présent ordre à
Robert Whitney Imbrie
H. P. Townsend
Seal

The days were passing pleasantly. July ended and still we remained at Triaucourt. We were beginning to tire of inaction and to wish for the front—yes, even though it meant the Vortex. Therefore we were delighted when at the beginning of the second week in August orders came in for us to move. But we were not yet to go to the front. It was merely to the village of Vaubecourt, seven kilometers distant from Triaucourt that we shifted. The change meant our Division, which for the past month had been *en repos,* was now *en réserve* and as Vaubecourt was in the Verdun section, in all probability we should again go up to the Vortex.

Vaubecourt is now little more than a name. A few blackened walls still stand, a few houses remain unscathed. That is all. Here it was the Germans made a stand from which the French finally drove them. The village is on the edge of a considerable forest, part of the Argonne. On the outskirts of this forest we established our camp. A really beautiful spot it was and save that in places the forest was traversed by splendid roads, the region was as wild as the Adirondacks. Everywhere the spoor of the wild boar was visible. The C.O. was an ardent sportsman and together we spent the greater part of the ensuing nights roaming the woods or sitting motionless in a thicket, waiting for a shot, returning as the rising sun began to light the forest. On the way we used to exchange hunting reminiscences, as we had

both shot great game in Africa—he in the Transvaal, I in the Congo.

Five months had now elapsed since I had been *en permission*. The Squad now being part of the line, *permissions* were "open;" two men at a time were permitted to leave. So on the morning of August twelfth, Josh and I left in the staff car for Bar-le-Duc where we caught the train and that same evening reached Paris.

CHAPTER X

ENCORE VERDUN

PERMISSION was over. It was five o'clock in the afternoon and I had just reached Bar-le-Duc. My orders were to report to the officer in charge of the *parc* here, where I would be told the whereabouts of my Section. So I at once sought out the commandant who informed me: *"Votre Section est à Verdun,"* a cheering little piece of news. None of our cars were in Bar-le-Duc, so there was no way of getting to the front that night. With me were three recruits for Section 4, at the time quartered at the village of Ippecourt some thirty kilometers from Verdun. As there would be a machine in for them next day I decided to remain in Bar-le-Duc for the night and go out with them. Accordingly on the following morning, through the courtesy of Section 4's commander, I was taken out to Ippecourt and after lunching with the Squad was driven over to my own Section.

I found the Squad quartered in the Château Billemont, some three kilometers from Dugny and about equal distance from Verdun. It was a fine, large

place splendidly situated with numerous trees which offered concealment for the cars from scouting aeroplanes. I was somewhat puzzled to know why we had been assigned such elaborate quarters until I saw the answer in a number of shell holes about the house. The place was under intermittent bombardment. Prior to our occupancy it had been the headquarters of a high officer and had been evacuated by him because of its frequent shelling. We were perfectly willing to take our chances with shells to have such comfortable quarters. Here we had half a dozen rooms for sleeping—the irony of the situation being we got very little chance to sleep—a fine large dining-room, a lounging-hall, kitchen and salon. There was even château stationery and a telephone, though this of couse did not function.

On this, our second time at Verdun, we served but one *poste*—the Caserne Marceau. This *caserne*,—now demolished by shell fire—had topped the crest of a considerable hill which rose to the northwest of the city, and about two kilometers beyond. It was an exposed spot and it and the approach were swept by almost continual shell fire. The *poste* itself was a half-dugout in the side of the hill just below the crest, shored with timbers and both roofed and banked with sand bags.

To reach this *poste* after leaving Château Billemont we proceeded north along the road which passed the Château grounds. A kilometer or so beyond, the

road turned to the left and for a way paralleled a spur railroad track. On this track was operated a mobile 100 marine battery mounted on specially constructed cars. The "hundred" takes a shell about four feet in length, the detonation from which is terrific. Frequently the guns would be in action as we passed and the concussion fairly rocked our heads. The road about here bore testimony of the accuracy of the enemy's fire. But the battery being mobile, changed its position frequently and never suffered a hit. Again bending to the north this road entered a little patch of shell-torn timber. Here was a transparency with the information *Zone Dangereux* and an equally superfluous injunction to *Allez Vite*. Beyond the timber the road turning to the east entered the city gate. Traversing the city and emerging as before on the Etain road, our new run left this about a kilometer beyond and commenced a long ascent on the left at the end of which, near the hill crest, was located the *poste*. The entire run was under the enemy's fire. This *poste* served that portion of the line of which Fleury was the central objective. Evacuations, as before, were made to the church at Dugny.

Though we served but one *poste* this time our work was much more severe than at our first time up at Verdun. Consulting the communiqués you will find that at this time there was a series of attacks and counter attacks upon Fleury; that the Germans took, lost and retook the village, that the French regained

it, advancing toward Thiaumont, and that the enemy's line near the Vaux-le-Chapitre Wood was captured on a length of sixteen hundred meters. These gains were paid for in bloody toll. Thousands of wounded poured through the *poste* at Caserne Marceau.

At first there was pretense of a schedule, the cars leaving quarters at stated intervals, but this was soon abandoned, having been found impracticable, and when on duty a car rolled almost continuously. As before, the Section was divided into two Squads of ten cars each, but as the wounded frequently came in such numbers that one Squad could not handle them all, twenty of the cars were put into service. This meant that sleep "went by the board" and many of the men served forty-eight hours without a wink, some of them falling asleep at the wheel as they drove. To facilitate the service, at night ten cars were stationed in Verdun itself. The stand here was at what had been the Military Club (*Circle Militaire*), an imposing brick building now half-wrecked by shells. Within those elaborately decorated rooms, the scene of so much festivity and high living, we wandered about or sat upon the plush chairs awaiting our call, the while the bombardment raged about.

The nights during this period were especially dark. In the pitchy streets of Verdun with the débris piled high on either side it was impossible to see a bayonet thrust ahead. Eyes were of no avail; one steered by ***feel.*** Several times cars met head on. Twice when

this occurred both the colliding cars were put temporarily out of commission. Again, on several occasions, it occurred that a driver, overcome with weariness, fell asleep at the wheel to be awakened by his car's crashing into a wall or ditch. The mechanical force was kept busy with repairs and rendered yeoman service. At times there were several cars *en panne* at once and we should have been swamped had it not been for the fact that our rolling stock had been supplemented by a large truck ambulance capable of transporting twenty sitting cases simultaneously. With this and the entire Squad in action, we were able at all times to handle our *poste*.

There were the usual miraculous escapes. Giles was blown off his feet by the concussion of a shell. Bob's car was pierced by *éclat* which wounded the already wounded men therein. Some were knocked down by concussion. Some of the cars were hit but the Squad did not suffer a scratch.

We came off duty at Caserne Marceau at three o'clock on the afternoon of Saturday, September ninth, it falling to my lot to evacuate the last load of *blessés*. As I descended the hill from the *poste*, a number of cars of the replacing French Section were coming up. Within two days after taking over our section, two of the drivers were killed and two seriously wounded. On the same night three *brancardiers* were killed at the *poste*.

Though relieved from duty, we were not to leave

Billemont for another day and accordingly on Sunday several of us obtained permission to go into Verdun. Though I had been through the city scores of times, I had been always in my car or on duty. Hence I had had little opportunity to really view the place. At the city gate the gendarme stopped us and in spite of my *laisser-passer* was disinclined to allow me to pass since I had neglected to wear a helmet and it was strictly forbidden to enter unless thus crowned. But after some argument he consented to turn his head and we went in. It was a strange experience, thus wandering in this deserted, stricken city. It gave one something of the sensation Pompeii does. Though the sun shone brightly enough, the chill of ruin and desolation prevaded. In all the city there was scarcely a house that did not bear the scar of shell, while in scores, hundreds of places there remained but a pile of stones and a yawning hole where once had stood a house. In many places a shell coming from above had entirely wrecked the interior of a building leaving the four walls standing.

We ascended the hill to the citadel. Its walls were scarred and shattered but its two towers still bravely reared themselves four-square to the world, guarding the ruins below. As we left the citadel, and turned into a side street a quaint corner café attracted our attention. Entering through a shell-made orifice we seated ourselves at one of the dust-covered tables. It must have been a cosy place once. Low smoke-

browned ceilings above, paneled walls, seats with high backs and at one end the *barrette*. Here many an absinthe has been sipped. And there on the shelves back of the bar still stood the glasses which in the happier days, *avant la guerre,* had clinked to merry toasts. We passed down the street and entered a private house, one side of which was blown in. The room in which we stood had evidently been the salon. On the mantel stood some ornaments and a joyous china chanticleer with raised head seemed to pour forth the defiance of France. Below, on the same street was a hardware store—or, as the English would say, an ironmonger's shop. Its front was smashed in and scattered about the floor were bolts, screws, tinware and all the goods of the trade. We entered an hotel and continuing down the corridor came to the "bureau." Here the keys to the guest rooms still hung in orderly array, waiting for the patrons who would never come. There was the open register in which after knocking off the dust we inscribed our names. Rain and snow, coming through the shattered roof, had stained the hangings, and the upholstery was beginning to rot. Broken marble-topped tables and wrecked chairs littered the bar. The upper floors or what was left of them, were cluttered with furniture. Bed linen lay scattered about and over everything was a coating of plaster, while underfoot glass crackled.

In the rear of the building, the front of which had been some sort of a shop, we found a room three

sides of which were lined with rows of books. Some were solid-looking tomes bound in calf, now rotting from the exposure. There were scientific treatises and works of reference as well as a few paper-backed ones and on one shelf were a number of works printed in German. The roof of this place was gone and pools of water stood on the floor and mildew was everywhere. In a closet leading from this room, clothing still hung, one pompous evening coat of ancient cut jet buttons still preserving its dignity—being supported by a coat hanger.

For three hours we wandered about but during all our ramble we did not encounter one single soul. Not so much as a dog or a cat moved among the ruins and when the guns quieted not a sound was heard save the crunching of the glass beneath our feet.

While within the city we had heard no shells, but as we passed through the gate a crash sounded and looking back we could see a cloud of dust rising in the still air. The Hun was hurling his hate.

It had been arranged for that afternoon that the regimental *pasteur* should hold service for the Squad at quarters. Though not a bearer of arms, no braver man wears the blue, and he was a great favorite. After noon mess we all gathered in front of the château, lounging about on the grass awaiting the chaplain's arrival. Suddenly, out of nothing, sounded the screech of a shell. It did not need much experience to tell that it was coming close. Conversation ceased;

pipes remained poised in the air; not a soul moved. There was an explosion. The shell had hit about one hundred yards down the road. Then came a faint "boom" and eleven seconds later another shell came in, this time somewhat nearer. The château was being bombarded with 130's. We were all pretty well scared —at least I can speak for myself—but no one had the nerve to be the first to run for the cellar. So we lounged there waiting. At this moment the staff car with the *pasteur* came through the gate, a shell hitting not fifty meters behind and the *éclat* whirring viciously overhead. For perhaps ten minutes the bombardment continued—trying minutes they were too—and then the firing ceased as suddenly as it had commenced. Beneath a fine old tree we grouped ourselves about the chaplain and lowered our heads while he prayed to *"le bon Dieu,* our protector in times of peril, our strength in moments of trial."

At nine the next day we formed convoy in front of the château. The sun, smiling on our departure, came out from behind a bank of clouds. The guns were in action and their thunder followed us, gradually growing fainter as we passed through Dugny and on toward Ippecourt. Shortly before noon, we "spoke" Triaucourt and dropped anchor in our old harbor.

CHAPTER XI

THE ARGONNE

ON the same afternoon upon which we reached Triaucourt the Squad drove over to the small nearby village of Eire. Here we found the *brancardiers* of the Division had preceded us and shortly afterwards the commanding general and his aides appeared. The names of the soldiers of the Division who had especially distinguished themselves under fire were called out and among the others, two from the Squad, "Hutsie" and Gyles. After congratulating the men as a whole, the individual citations were read and the Croix de Guerre pinned to their tunics. In the meanwhile the entire region was suffused with an erubescent glow from Gyles' embarrassed blushes.

We remained at Triaucourt but three days and on the morning of the fourth pulled out towards the northward, passing through the city of Ste. Menehould to the village of La Grange aux Bois, the *bois* in the case being the forest of the Argonne.

La Grange is a sleepy little village which lies sprawled along the side of the road about midway between Reims and Verdun. At the time we reached

here it was some fifteen kilometers back of the line. There were two picket stations, La Chalade, a wretched village about two and a half kilometers from the line and another small village at about the same distance. Evacuations were made to a dressing station located in La Grange and to Ste. Menehould, a place too small and too sleepy to warrant the name "city," and too large and populous to be called a town. (The sector was at this time one of the dullest and most dormant in the whole line and were it not for the newspapers which reached us occasionally, we would never have known the war was going on.)

Our runs took us through neighboring towns, Clermont—now almost totally destroyed, La Claon, Les Islettes, where the church steeple was tilted awry, the work of a passing shell, Les Controllere, and to a village which bore the somewhat cryptic name of Corrupt.

Just off the main road at La Grange stood a portable wooden barracks which was assigned to us for quarters. It was too airy to heat and leaked like a five dollar raincoat. Almost overnight fall seemed to have set in. Cold rain fell day after day; the mud deepened and a mournful wind swept through the dismal little village. Josh, Gyles and I, stimulated by a desire to avoid pneumonia and an aversion to sleeping in wet blankets, moved up the road to a deserted one-room house. The place was a perfect replica of Fagin's Den as usually staged in the third act of the dramatized version of "Oliver Twist." We succeeded

in borrowing a wooden bench and table and we obtained a small stove. We exerted much effort in setting up the pipe and the more in digging a hole through the wall to accommodate it, after which it occurred to us that we had no fuel nor was any obtainable. Our quarters we shared with a sociable family of rats, or perhaps I should say they permitted us to share their quarters. The prospect held little of cheer. Winter was coming—in fact was almost upon us. The deadness of the sector meant little work and that of the dull back-of-the line sort. There was absolutely no excitement, nor prospect of any. For all we could see the Section might be doomed to put in the entire winter at La Grange. *Permission* was nearly three months away. For the first time some of us were beginning to realize that even war may have its monotonous side. And then something occurred which promised to change matters.

"Hutsie" brought the news. He came into Fagin's Den one dismal afternoon and with a caution born of former collapses gingerly lowered himself on the bench. He sat silently looking at me a moment or two and then grinned "How'd you like to go to the Orient?" "Fine," I answered, "When do we start?" "I'm speaking seriously," he affirmed. "The Army of the Orient has asked for a section of our cars, and headquarters has just wired asking for three volunteers from the men in the Service. Yours is one of the names mentioned. The enlistment is for seven

months and your answer must be given by tomorrow morning."

Outside the rain came down, the wind blew the smoke down the leaky pipe and there was a little of the picturesque to be seen from the rug-stuffed window. But in the Orient, the sun-smitten Orient, surely there would be no more cold feet and always there would be the picturesque. Perhaps even "Moscow" was there. Of course it would not be so pleasant in a new Section. Old S. S. U. I. after nine months had become home. There was not a man in the Squad for whom I did not possess a genuine liking. And it was not only the Squad—the Americans—to whom the regret of separation would extend. There were the French members of the Section. There was the genial La Blanch of the *bureau,* the smiling De Ville, the ever obliging Zouave, Bonner, the provident quartermaster, "Old Sleeps"—so called because in furtherance of his duties he was always demanding our "sleep"—expired *ordre de mouvement,* "Celt," the cook's mate and surely not least, there was Gen. "George Washington" Rop with his half-dozen English words, of which "shocking" was one, his ready willingness and grave demeanor.

I sought out Gyles whom I found administering nourishment to an invalid tire. He had heard the news. "Are you going?" I asked. "If you will," he answered. *"C'est bien,"* and we shook hands. We found Bob strong for the prosposition and our names

we wired into headquarters as having volunteered for the Army of the Orient. *Jacta est alia.*

It was on the next day but one that I made my last "roll" as a member of Section I, taking some *malades* into Ste. Menehould. On my return I relinquished "New Number Nine" to her future driver, bespeaking for her careful treatment.

On the morning of the twenty-eighth of September our *ordre de mouvement* which we had impatiently awaited arrived. The four of us—for "Vic." the little terrier, had also volunteered for the Orient— climbed into the staff car—the fellows crowded round shaking hands, "Hutsie" threw in the clutch, there was a cheer and we were on our way.

CHAPTER XII

ON BOARD THE "MADEIRA"

"We are those fools who found no peace
In the dull world we left behind,
But burned with passion for the East
And drank strange frenzy from its wind.
The world where wise men live at ease
Fades from our unregretful eyes,
And blind across uncharted seas
We stagger on our enterprise."

IT was close to midnight. The hush of Paris in war time had long since fallen on the city and save for the occasional hoot of a distant automobile horn there was nothing to break the silence. We, the Squad for the Orient, were clustered around our dunnage down in a freight yard. There were twenty-six of us, men recruited from every Section in the Service—and the Corps now numbered ten Sections—chosen because of experience and ability to meet the conditions which the work presented. The frenzied period of preparation was over; the outfits had been gathered, the cars had been assembled, reviewed and

crated, good-byes had been said and now we were waiting the word which would send us on our way. Along the track stretching away into the blackness of the yard, was our train, a line of "open-face" trucks upon which were the forty-two cars which represented the rolling stock of the Section.

There was a movement down the line and we looked up to see several officers, one wearing the uniform and insignia of the Commander of the Automobile Service of the Army. It was for him we had been waiting. He responded to our salute, as we gathered around him, and presently he spoke: "Messieurs, you have proven your worth with the armies of France. Now you are about to join the Army of the Orient in the Balkans. You are going to a hard country where you will be confronted with harsh conditions—conditions far more severe than you have here endured. That you will meet these unflinchingly and conquer, your record here proves. I shall observe you with interest and wish you the success which your courage in volunteering for this service merits. Messieurs, adieu and *Vive la France.*"

We turned and climbed into the two passenger coaches which were attached to the train. There was the usual blowing of tin whistles, without which no continental train ever starts; the wheels began to grind and creak and we wound slowly out on the first stage of our journey to the East. Somewhere a clock struck the hour of midnight.

There is no great cheer in endeavoring to sleep in a place quite evidently designed with particular care for promoting sleeplessness and though some of us managed to stretch out in the space between the seats and in the corridor, it was not an especially restful night. However, "Buster" with his "shining morning face," proceeding down the aisle unheedful of what lay beneath, opened the day auspiciously, as he stepped upon Giles's face, a performance appreciated by all, save perhaps Buster and Giles. The day passed slowly, as the stops, though frequent, were not of sufficient duration to permit of our wandering and there was no opportunity to obtain any hot food. About two, we reached the city of Macon and, as the train was announced to remain here for an hour and a half, we took advantage of the opportunity thus afforded for a brisk walk. Another crampful night we endured and then, about eleven in the morning of the second day after leaving Paris, we detrained at Marseilles.

Until the transport was ready to take on board our cars, we had nothing to do. Quarters were established in a hotel, quite the most luxurious cantonment the Squad had ever known, and our sole duties were to report each morning at eight o'clock for possible orders.

It had been nine years since I had been in Marseilles. Then it had impressed me as being a rather sleepy city, partaking of the repose of the South. Now we found it bustling with life, the gayest city, I think,

I have ever seen. The point of departure for the French expeditionary force, or to use the official designation, l'Armée Française d'Orient, the port had taken on all the activity incident to an undertaking in which hundreds of thousands of men were involved. Then, too, many of the units of the British Army of the Mediterranean either passed through or touched here. This city of the south had been too far from war's theatre to experience any of its horors and the soberness which Paris had assumed was lacking. At night, when thousands of electric bulbs made the city's streets streams of light, when the cafés blazed and the sidewalks teemed with the sailors from the seven seas rubbing elbows with the soldiers of two armies, it was worth going far to see. In Marseilles the lid was not merely off; it had been thrown away and within the civic cauldron there was the seething and bubbling of unrestrained revelry. There were heterogeneous days and hectic nights.

Meanwhile we had assisted in the loading of our cars. On reporting at morning mess we received orders to report on board our transport at four o'clock that afternoon. We found the S. S. *Madeira* warped alongside the quay. She was a converted tramp and even after her conversion we found her sinfully filthy. Formerly a German, the flag of Portugal now flew at her mast. Around, about and on board her was the hurry and confusion incident to departure. As we ascended one gang plank, a convoy

of mules was being driven up another. A number of cattle, penned on the main deck, forward, bellowed their protest. Dogs dodged about underfoot, chains clinked, winches creaked, steam hissed and orders were being shouted in three languages. The decks were piled high with hay, life rafts and miscellaneous cargo. As the novels say "confusion reigned."

We did not seek our steamer chairs, principally because there were no steamer chairs, and no place to put them had there been any. Neither were we bothered with looking up our staterooms or our places at table; in fact most of the usual worries of a steamer passenger were saved us. So, lacking other occupation we lined the rail and like voyagers the world over watched and commented upon our fellow passengers coming aboard. And they were enough to excite comment. For plodding up the gangplank came eight hundred yellow men from Indo-China, French colonial troops. A sinuous line, they stretched along the quay, the end disappearing within the hold. Their high nasal twang reminded one irresisttibly of the notes of a banjo, punctuated now and then by a laugh as though a few flute notes had been introduced into the program. How their officers ever told them apart was a mystery, for to occidental eyes they were exactly alike, the same slanting eyes, the same black, wiry hair, the same lack of expression. Each was simply a bifurcated yellow ditto of the others.

I fancy none of the Squad will soon forget that first night on board the *Madeira*. Into the vessel's hold had been built tier on tier of iron shelves. One section of these shelves had been assigned to us for our very own. Above, below and all around us were our yellow friends. Close proximity revealed another of their characteristics—like Kipling's camels, "they smelled most awful vile." There was no air in that hold, but there was plenty of atmosphere, a sort of gaseous Gorganzola. I doubt if any of us slept; we were merely bludgeoned into insensibility by lack of oxygen. A stiff breeze, which had blown up during the afternoon, with the coming of night had freshened into half a gale, so that departure had been postponed till morning. The ship strained at her hawsers and tossed about, the groaning of the timbers vying with that of the seasick "chinks." Dante, peering into that hold, would have found ample material for another cycle.

With the coming of daylight we were on deck. The wind had abated somewhat. The gangways had been run in the night before and the lines were now loosed off. By seven o'clock we were winding our way out of the harbor past the curious rock formations which guard its entrance and by mid-forenoon had dropped its headlands. In the open sea there was a distinct swell on, and this with the smells and sights gave us cause for internal reflection. During the morning we made a sortie into the fetid hold and dragged out

our belongings. We were all fully determined that come what might we should not spend another night below hatches. We proceeded to pitch camp on the boat-deck where, during the remainder of the voyage, we remained, sleeping in the lea of the smallboats at night and lounging about the decks during the day.

The voyage from Marseilles takes normally about four days. But there was nothing normal about the *Madeira.* With an entire disregard of submarines, she proceeded with the phlegmatic complacency of a stout old lady going to a funeral. The fact that it was likely to be our funeral did not lend cheer. Nothing seemed to disturb her. She would steer perhaps half a knot on one course, then change her course, proceeding an equal distance on a right-angle tack before again coming about. The theory was that, should a torpedo be launched, we should be where it was not, a theory which might have worked, had the *Madeira* possessed such a thing as speed.

On coming on board, each man had been supplied with a life-belt, which he was supposed to keep on or by him at all times. Once each day a life drill was held and the small boats manned. Frequently, too, the bugle sounded "to arms," at which time the rails were lined with all hands prepared to let go at a possible submersible. Mounted on the main deck aft was a swivel "75," served by a naval crew. In addition to these precautions, as we approached the narrows between Sicily and the coast of Africa, lookouts

were stationed, two in the bows, two on the bridge, and two with the gun crew aft. This duty was assigned to our Squad and we stood four hour watches, day and night, throughout the remainder of the voyage.

There was more or less monotony, but this is true of most voyages and we had some unusual distractions. There was the ever-present menace of the submarine; there was the slaughtering of cattle on the deck, forward; there were the yellow men to watch and listen to, for the matter of that, for they frequently "picked out" a high falsetto chant which rang of the East. Their favorite ditty had a chorus which they would sing for hours on end, *"ling, hio ah ee ah, ling hio ah ee ah"* and with which we became so familiar that we could sing it ourselves, much to their delight.

One day—it was the twenty-fifth of October—the monotony was broken by an impressive incident—a burial at sea. At two in the afternoon watch, a blare of bugles sounded forward. Massed on the main deck, aft, three hundred of the yellow men were under arms. On the port quarter, supported on two casks, rested a plain, wooden box, draped with the tricolor of France. As the bugles ceased the ship's commander and the commandant, the highest ranking officer on board, both clad in full dress and bearing sidearms, descended the companionway stairs and advanced to a position behind the casket. A squad of eight soldiers, flanking the casket, came to attention,

their bayonets flashing in the sun. The commander raised his arm; a bell struck; the engines slowed down, stopped. Somewhere forward a dog barked and then an unnatural silence settled down and enveloped the ship. Amidst this, itself almost a benediction, the commandant read the burial service, his voice sounding very solemn there in the unbroken waste of the tropic sea. He ceased speaking; the bugles sounded forth the plaintive, mournful notes of *le repos*. As the last sound died away, the hand of every officer rose to his *képi* in salute, and with a swish and click three hundred guns presented arms. The casket was slowly upended and the remains of Mohammet San Chu, a soldier of the army of France, sank to its last cantonment.

Mohammet San Chu had died of spinal meningitis. That night three more yellow men were crumpled up with the disease, and from then on it tore through their ranks like a salvo from a shrapnel battery. We never knew how many succumbed, for the bodies thereafter were merely shotted and heaved overboard at night; but certainly the number must have run into the scores. A distinct feeling of uneasiness pervaded the ship. Crowded as we were, a thousand and a half of men, on that one small ship, to avoid contact with the "chinks" was impossible. Sanitation was non-existent. Filth collected on the decks and, to make matters worse, water, both for bathing and drinking, gave out. During the day the sun beat fiercely

In This *Boyau*, or Communicating Trench, One of the Squad Was Killed

down on decks littered with cargo and unprotected by awnings. The restless "chinks" cluttered the spaces and filled the air with their everlasting twanging; dogs scuttled about the slippery decks; the cattle bellowed. Below the engines throbbed and occasionally a clot of cinder-laden smoke belched from the stack and hung over the ship. But at night, as the ship wallowed along in the darkness, not a light was permitted, not even the glow from a cigarette, then it was better. The glare was gone; a cool breeze swept away the smoke; the stars came out and blinked at us as we lay beneath the small boats. Someone would start a chorus and "just a song at twilight" would sound out over the waters. Then we would fall silent, wondering what the East held in store, till presently, wrapping ourselves in the blankets, we drifted off into sleep.

It was on the morning of the ninth day after embarking that we awakened to gaze out upon the most famous mountain and saw the sun reflected from the snow-clad Olympian slopes. A few hours later we passed the torpedo net which guards the outer harbor, and presently caught our first glimpse of the white minarets of Salonika. About us were dozens of battleships and merchantmen, some flying the tricolor, others with the Union Jack, others with the green, white and red of Italy. The gigantic four funneler *La France,* now a hospital ship, rode at anchor, while close in shore were ranged many wooden

boats with the peculiar Peloponnesian rig. We passed the length of the harbor before dropping anchor. The yellow quarantine flag flew from our masthead and presently the health officers came off. We were all anxious to learn their ruling. Rumor spread that the entire ship was to be held forty days in quarantine. The thought of remaining two score days on that filthy craft, while she rode at anchor off shore, nearly made us wild. A line of signal flags was broken out and presently, in answer, three launches came along side. Into these were loaded half a hundred of the yellow men, victims of the spinal meningitis. The ship then swung about and we proceeded to the other end of the harbor, where we again dropped anchor. The yellow flag was still flying. We lay here for the rest of the day and speculation ran rife on our chances of being held thus indefinitely. On the following morning, much to our relief, the yellow flag was lowered; we warped alongside the quay and about noon disembarked. It was the tenth day after leaving Marseilles.

CHAPTER XIII

INTO SALONIKA

TO the northeast of the city, where the barren plains merge into the barren foot-hills, which in turn rise into barren, scraggy mountains, was established our camp. It was night when we reached the spot and as our tents had not arrived we spread our blankets on the bare ground and turned in under the sky.

Until our cars should be unloaded, there was no work for the Squad. We were, therefore, given every alternate day for "shore liberty," when we were free to go down into the city and wander at will.

We found it a city well worth seeing. Dating back three hundred years before the birth of Christ, it has been and is the stamping ground of history. The Avar, the Goth, the Hun, the Saracen, the Norseman captured and sacked it. The Serb, the Bulgar, the Venetian and the Turk have fought over it. For five hundred years the latter held and ruled over it, until, after the second Balkan war, it passed to Greece in 1913. "There will always be fighting in the Balkans," says one of Kipling's men and when we found the

armed men of six nations guarding the prisoners of four others through the streets of Salonika, we felt that it was so. Before the allied occupation, Salonika had a population of perhaps 150,000, about fifty per cent of whom were Spanish Jews. The remainder of the population was divided among Turks, Serbs, Roumanians, Greeks, Cretans, Czechs, Albanians and the bastard tribes of the near east. With the coming of the allies and the influx of refugees, the population trebled. Rarely, if ever, in the world's history had there been such a mixture of men and races as now thronged the rough, slippery streets of the city and filled the air with a conglomeration of languages unequalled since the I. W. W. knocked off work on the tower of Babel. All the characters of the Orient were there; the veiled woman, the muezzin, the bearded, befezzed Turk, the vendor of wine with his goat-skin, the money-changer, the charcoal-seller, the Macedonian mountaineer with his ballet skirt and pom-pommed shoes, the rag-clad leper, the porter, the black-hatted Greek priest, women in bloomers, women with queer parrot-like headdresses, dignified rabbinical looking old men in white turbans and loose, flowing robes; and mingling with this throng in the narrow, twisting streets were the soldiers of France, Annamites, Senegalese, Moroccans, the English Tommy, the Italian in his uniform of elephant-hide gray, the sturdy Russ, the weary Serb, the Cretan Guards, soldiers of the newly formed Venezelos army and now

and again guarded German, Austrian, Bulgar and Turkish prisoners. From the battleships in the bay came the sailors of four nations and from the merchantmen a half score of other nationalities found representation and mingled with the crowd. Lest some fragment of the way remain unoccupied, that ubiquitous Ford of the east, the burro, jostled the passerby and droves of sheep and goats scuttled about his legs. Over all this shifting mass sounded the curious hum of many languages, punctuated by the cries of the street vendors and the honk and rattle from army motors.

You are led to believe that everybody is in the street until you enter a café and find it difficult to obtain a seat. Here you can drink delicious black Turkish coffee, served in tiny brass cups, or, if you like, a sticky white liquid tasting exactly like sweetened paregoric and reminiscent of collicky nights. Here, too, you may try the giant hookah, or water pipe, though, after reflecting on the generations of Turks who must have curled a lip over its mouthpiece, you probably will refrain.

Then there are the bazaars. They are booth-like shops which open directly on the streets. And the streets on which they open are roofed over so that business is conducted in a subdued light, conducive to meditation and also, perhaps, (but whisper it) to the concealment of defects in the wares. Here are displayed flint-lock pistols, embroideries, laces, sheep-skin coats—and ye gods, how they do smell!—leather san-

dals, beaten copper ware, knitted socks, beautiful lace silver work, amber beads and cigarette holders. And if you inquire "From whence come these things?" he of the shop will make answer, "From Albania, O Sire," whereas, be the truth known, none save perhaps the silver work ever saw Albania.

We had been told that the flies would be all over by October. They were—all over everywhere. In Salonika the fly is ever present; they festoon every rope, crawl over every exposed article of food, flop into every liquid, swarm about your head, skate over your person and generally act "just as happy as though invited." Heretofore, I had always considered a little restaurant in Gettysburg, Md., only slightly mis-named "The Busy Bee," as being the world's headquarters for flies, but a Salonika fly, if transported to that restaurant, would hunger for companionship and pine away and die of lonesomeness. It is beyond dispute that should the rest of the world run out of flies, Salonika would be able to re-stock it and still have enough left to bat in the .300 class. They do not seem to bother the Turk. He accepts them as decreed by Allah; it is enough. As for the Greek, he is too busy frying fish to notice. The Greek considers that day lost whose low descending sun sees not a mess of fish fried. Everywhere, in little open-faced booths, you will see him with a tiny charcoal brazier—frying fish. At early morn, at dewy eve, all through the sunny day, this piscatorial pastime

proceeds. What is done with these schools and oceans of fish, I wot not. Never have I beheld mortal man eat thereof. Indeed, I question whether he could eat one without giving quick proof of his mortality. Possibly the frying has to do with the mysteries of the Greek religion; possibly it is a form of sport, like tatting or solitaire. I know not. Whatever the cause, whatever the result, certain it is, its popularity is beyond question.

Of course there be other foodstuffs. Exposed to sale—and flies—you will see them. Many weird and curious shapes they have, deterring to all save an ostrich, or a Macedonian. One sort there is, a brown ball, slightly larger than a shrapnel ball—also slightly heavier. These are served with honey. Having consumed a salvo of these, one is prone to meditate on the vicissitudes of life. There is another dish resembling lamp chimney packing.

This, too, is chaperoned with honey. The substance most in demand, however, is a ghastly sort of plaster exactly resembling putty. Personally, I have never eaten putty but after trying this other stuff, I am convinced I should prefer putty as being more digestible and equally palatable. Then there are numerous white, fly-sprinkled sour milk products, rather pleasing from a scenic standpoint, but fearful to the unaccustomed taste. All of these concoctions are regarded by the populace as being cibarious, nay more,

as being delightful to eat. Truly the ways of the East be strange.

The setting for the street life and characters is appropriate. The quaintly colored houses with their overhanging second stories and latticed windows, the narrow twisting ways, the stately minarets add to the mystery and lend atmosphere. But incongruities there are, the West clashing with the East, the modern opposing the ancient. It was disheartening to the lover of the picturesque to behold motor lorries speeding down the Street of the Vardar, that street dating from Roman times, a part of the way over which passed the caravans from the Bosphorus to the Adriatic. Then, too, it jarred one's sensibilities to see a trolley car passing beneath the triumphal arch of Galerius, dating from the year 296, or the walls of the White Tower of Süle Iman the Magnificent reflecting the lights of a cinema palace, or to hear the plaintive cry of the muezzin, calling the faithful to prayer, broken by an auto hooter. And the regrettable part of it all is that when there is a co-mingling of the Occident with the Orient, it is the latter which gives way with a loss of the picturesque and the tranquil.

As the sun sinks across the harbor and the after glow pricks out the jagged mountains and paints every spar and rope of the battle fleet with an orange glow, the bazaars become deserted, the easterner betakes himself within his doors and the life of the

city moves down toward the water front. The night life of Salonika was not nearly so extensive or unrestrained as that of Marseilles. While not under martial law, the streets were at all times patrolled by military police, French, English, Italian and Cretan, and no disorder was permitted. Along the great street which faces and follows the waterfront for several miles, are scattered cafés, cinema palaces, restaurants, theaters and dance halls. The cinema shows are like such affairs the world over, the restaurants are Greek —which is to say the worst in the world; the theaters produce mediocre burlesque but the cafés and dance halls offer more of interest. There are a few dancing girls — mostly thick-ankled, swarthy Greeks,— a singer or two and a persevering pianist, to whom nobody pays any attention. But most of the entertainment is furnished by the patrons themselves. You may see a couple of tipsy Zouaves, from the Tell, gravely performing the "dance of the seven veils"; a score of Serbs, grouped around a table, occasionally break into one of their wild, weird chants, thumping their mugs in rhythm but never laughing—I never saw a Serb laugh. If you call out *"Cobra"*—"good"—to them when they finish, however, they will smile. When things quiet down a bit someone starts "Keep the home fires burning" and instantly there is a thump of hobbed feet and every Tommy present swings into the chorus. Presently a *poilu* is pushed to his feet and in a rich voice sings the prologue from *Pagliacci.*

The Italians present applaud vociferously and everyone bangs on the floor while there come cries of *"encore," "bravo," "dobra"* and "good" which bring the singer back.

We fall into conversation with a Tommy at our table. He has "been up country," as he calls it, in fact, is just back. "How is it up there?" we inquire.

"It's 'ell, that's wot it is, 'ell," he responds.

"Oui monsieur," chimes in a *poilu,* "it is all that there is of terrible."

Nice cheery talk, this for us who are going up there. The Tommy is named " 'Arvey." In his opinion the " 'ole blinking country ain't fit to kill a balmy dog in." We have his mug replenished, in acknowledgment of which he hoists it, nods toward us and remarks "top 'ole," to which etiquette requires we respond "every time." His "pal" joins the group and 'Arvey informs the newcomer we are "priceless fellows," which, considering we have paid for the rounds, is an ambiguous compliment. The chum is full of dignity and beer. He regards 'Arvey solemnly, for some time listening to him describe his own prowess with the bayonet. At the conclusion of this not overly modest recital, he leans forward, gravely wags his finger and demands, "Tell me 'Arvey, 'ave you ever 'it a 'Un"?

On the days when we did not have permission to go into the city, we remained in the vicinity of camp or took walks back into the barren hills. The ground

on which our tents were pitched was, I am convinced, the hardest in the world and it was a week or more before our bones and muscles accustomed themselves to its surface. Not far from the camp was a tiny café, kept by a Greek who spoke French, and here we would repair and in the course of a day drink quarts of thick Turkish coffee. Here, too, could be obtained sausages, or at least what passes for sausages in Macedonia. Nearly everyone in the Squad tried them—and found them guilty. They must have been heirlooms in that Greek's family. Certainly they antedated the first Balkan war.

At this time there was in progress one of those incomprehensible revolutions, without which no Macedonian or Central American is happy. No man knew what it was all about, but there were great marchings and countermarchings and, as one of the revolutionary camps was near ours, we saw considerable of the "goings on." They made a fearful row about it all and at night, when the moon shone, they would cluster together and with heads tilted upwards bay out some agonizing choruses. We fervently hoped that the revolution would suffer a speedy suppression and its participants meet a just retribution.

Our illusions, formed in France, respecting the warmth and sun of the Orient underwent speedy change. We found the climate much like that we had left. Heavy torrential rains set in. Outside our tents the yellow mud was inches deep. After a fortnight,

with no work to occupy our attention, we became restless. The vessel, in which were our cars, remained at anchor in the harbor and apparently did naught save issue bulletins that *"demain"* it would discharge cargo. Our spirits were further depressed by a sad incident which happened about this time. Sortwell, whose "cot was right hand cot to mine," a splendid, big chap, one of the most popular men in the Squad, was struck one night by a staff car and knocked unconscious. He never came to and died the following morning. He was buried with full military honors. On the morning of his burial we received word that our cars were ready for discharge at the dock.

We set to work the following day. That it rained, goes without saying. The crated cars were lowered over the ship's side and with crow-bar, pick and sledge we crashed into them. As soon as the crates were knocked away, gas was put into the tanks and the cars driven out to camp. We worked throughout the day and by ten that night had the satisfaction of releasing the last car.

The camp now became a scene of industry. The cars were parked in a hollow square formation. They had suffered some damage in transportation but this was soon remedied. The tire-racks, which had been demounted for the packing, were now re-installed. The lockers were replenished with spare gas and oil; tires were re-inflated and everything tuned up for departure. It had been determined to leave ten ambu-

lances in Salonika as a reserve and we also established a *dépot* of spare parts from which the field *atelier* could replenish its store from time to time. The remainder of our rolling stock, including the staff cars and the kitchen truck were now ready for departure. Reports had come in of lively fighting and a steady advance in the direction of Monastir, for which front rumor had it we were destined. We were anxious to be away. Finally on an afternoon in the middle of November we were reviewed by the commanding officer of the automobile corps of the A. F. O. Our cars were packed and it but remained to strike the tents and roll the blankets. *Enfin,* we awaited the word.

CHAPTER XIV

INTO THE BALKANS

THE first flicker of dawn was showing as we wound our way down through the outlying parts of Salonika, a sinuous line of ambulances and auxiliary cars. On the water front the convoy halted for final adjustment. The fore-glow, coming across the harbor, filtered through the spars of the shipping and gave promise of a clear day. A few early porters and rugged stevedores paused to gaze wonderingly upon us. The C.O. passed down the line to see if all were ready; the whistle sounded and we were off.

Passing through the already livening streets we paralleled the quay, turned towards the northwest and then, as the muezzins in the minarets were calling upon the faithful to greet the rising sun, entered upon the great caravan trail which runs back into the mountains, and Allah knows where. Past trains of little mountain ponies, laden with hides; past lumbering, solid-wheeled wagons, drawn by water buffaloes and piled high with roughly baled tobacco, tobacco from which are made some of the choicest Turkish cigarettes in the world; past other wagons with towering

piles of coarse native matting; past the herdsman and his flock, his ballet skirt blowing in the morning breeze; past the solemn Turk, mounted athwart his drooping burro, his veiled woman trudging behind. The city lay behind us now; the passersby became fewer, until only an occasional wayfarer and his burro were sighted. The road, pitted and gutted, stretched away through a barren, dreary country. The sun's early promise had not been fulfilled and a gray, slaty day emphasized the dreariness of the landscape. To our right bleak mountains rose to meet a slaty sky—nowhere appeared tree or shrub, not even a fence broke the monotony of the landscape, never a house, not even a road, though occasionally a muddy track wandered aimlessly through the waste. We rounded the mountains and crossed a sluggish stream, the Galiko. Once we saw a village far away, its white minarets rising above the dull gray of the ensemble. Then the desolation closed down. Farther on, over a shaky wooden bridge, we crossed the Vardar, the Axius of Virgil. Hereabouts the country was flat and swampy, but suddenly it changed, scattered trees began to appear, here and there rocks jutted out. The trail began to mount and presently as we twisted our way through the first settlement, the village of Yenizé, mountains came into view to the northeast and then moved towards the south and west. About eleven we sighted some whitewashed houses clinging to the side of a cliff, the overflow of the town of

Vodena through which we presently passed over a winding road of mountainous steepness; up we went, three hundred, four hundred meters, finally stopping where a fountain gushed from the roadside, a kilometer or so beyond the town.

We were in the heart of the hills now. On three sides of us the mountains rose to a height of six thousand feet or more. Their tops were covered with snow and from this time on we were never to lose sight of it.

Some biscuits, ham and chocolate found a good home and there was time for a couple of pipes before the whistle blew and we again cast off. And now our troubles began. Up to this time our way could at least lay claim to the name "road," but now even an attorney, working on a percentage basis, could establish no such identity for the straggling gully through which we struggled,—sometimes a heap of boulders, sometimes a mire, but always it climbed. The cars coughed and grunted and often we were forced to halt while the motors cooled. In mid-afternoon the rain, which had been threatening for some hours, set in and the ground quickly assumed the consistency of sticky paste, through which we sloughed our way. About four we spoke the Lake of Ostrovo and shortly afterwards passed through the straggling village of the same name. Deep sand here made the going hard but we soon left the shores of the lake and again headed straight into the mountains. So far as possible

When the Road Ahead Was Being Shelled It Became Necessary to Make a Detour Along This Sunken Way

the trail held to the passes but even so, the ascent was very great. As night fell we came to an especially steep stretch slanting up between snow covered mountains. From a little distance it looked as though someone, tiring of road building, had leaned the unfinished product up against a mountain side. Time and again we charged but without avail; no engine built could take that grade. Physics books tell us, "that which causes or tends to cause a body to pass from a state of rest to one of motion is known as Force." With twenty men to a car, pulling, pushing and dragging, we assumed the function of "force" and "caused a body" —the cars—to "pass from a state of rest to one of motion," hoisting them by main strength over the crest.

Night had shut down for some hours when the last car had topped the rise. A bone-chilling wind had swept down from the snow, the rain still fell. The lights were switched on and over a trail, flanked on one side by a towering cliff and on the other by a black chasm of nothingness, we kept on. Once we rounded a sharp curve, there was a sudden dip in the trail and in the darkness we almost shot off into the space below.

It still lacked some two hours of midnight when ahead we discerned a few flickering lights. The Lieutenant gave the signal and we came to a stop at the fringe of a miserable village. We had been sixteen hours at the wheel but had covered no more than one hundred and fifty kilometers. We were all cold and

hungry, but the soup battery was mired somewhere miles in the rear. Our lanterns showed us but a few stone hovels. Had we known more of the Balkans, we would not even have thought of finding a shop. We gave up thoughts of dinner, crawled within our cars and wrapping our great coats about us, sought to dream of "a cleaner, greener land."

The tramping of many feet and the sobbing of a man woke me next morning. I looked out to see a column of Russian infantry passing. One big fellow was crying as though his heart would break. Ba-né-a or Ba-netz-a, the village at which we had halted—proved to be a miserable collection of huts, constructed of rounded stones, with which the surrounding hills were covered. Like most Turkish villages, it clung to the side of a hill, sprawling there with no attempt at system or a view to streets. The buildings were of one story; a few had glass but in by far the most part straw was employed to block the windows. The twisting paths which wandered about between the houses were knee deep in black mud. There were no shops, not even a café.

Other and higher hills rose above the one on which the village was situated. These hills were barren and covered with loose stones, their tops were crested with rough breastworks behind which were empty cartridge cases, torn clothing, ponchos, and scattered bodies in faded uniforms, for here the Bulgar and Serb had opposed each other. To the north of the

village stood a few trees and here within a barbed-wire corral a few armed Serbs guarded several hundred Bulgar prisoners. The villagers were as unattractive as their surroundings, the men dull, dirty-looking specimens, the women cleaner but far from comely. The latter were dressed in skirts and blouses of many colors. Their heads were covered with shawls, the ends of which were wound about their necks. From beneath these straggled their hair, invariably woven into two plaits into which was interwoven hair from cow's tails dyed a bright orange. Upon their feet they wore wooden, heelless sandals which, when they walked, flapped about like shutters in a gale of wind. The little girls were miniature replicas of their mothers, save their faces were brighter—some almost pretty. They wore their many petticoats like their mothers, at mid-leg length, tiny head shawls and striped wool stockings. The endless occupation, both of the women and children, was the carrying of water in clay jars. They must have been building a river somewhere and judging from the amount of water they were transporting, it was to be no small size stream either.

Not all of the cars had come through to Ba-netz-a and so we awaited their arrival. Several had broken axles and the big *atelier* car and the soup battery had mired in crossing the Ostrovo flats. Meanwhile, perched on the side of a hill with the snow above us and a falling temperature, we, of the advance squad,

were reminded that winter was almost upon us. The days were gray and as there was nothing to do while awaiting the stragglers, save gaze across the valley which stretched southward below us, the time dragged. The boom of heavy guns came to us from the northwest and occasionally, when the wind was right, we could hear the crackle of infantry fire. Some couriers riding back from the front brought word that Monastir had fallen after fierce fighting and the French were advancing northward.

By evening of the third day all the cars had come up and, with the kitchen wagons once more in our midst, we were again able to have a hot meal. Our spirits rose and that night, clustered round a small fire, we sang some mighty choruses. At nine on the morning of the twenty-fourth of November—a cold, drizzly morning—we wormed our way down through the village and out upon the transport road northeast toward the Serbian frontier. Though hundreds of German, Bulgar and Turkish prisoners were at work upon the road it was scarcely passable. Everywhere we passed mired couriers and camions; dead horses and abandoned wagons were scattered about. The way led across a level valley floor. On the flat, muddy plains bordering the road were camps of French, English, Italians and Russians. Several aviator groups were squatted in the miry desolation.

As we advanced the road accomplished something we had deemed impossible—it grew worse. The trans-

port of five armies struggled along, or rather through it and contributed everything from huge tractors to little spool-wheeled cow-drawn Serbian carts. We passed through one squalid, war-festered village where the road reached the sublimity of awfulness and then about mid-day spoke the village of Sakulévo. Several demolished buildings, pocked walls and shelled houses showed the place had been recently under fire. Passing through, we crossed a sluggish stream, from which the village takes its name, and on a shell-scarred flat on the north bank halted and pitched our tents.

The road at this point bends to the east before again turning northward, and enters the long valley at the farther end of which lies the city of Monastir. About a mile northward from our camp was a stone which marked the border between Macedonia and Serbia. High ranges of mountains stretched along the side of the lonesome valley. No words of mine can describe the landscape as do the words of Service:

"The lonely sunsets flare forlorn
Down valleys dreadly desolate,
The lordly mountains soar in scorn
As still as death, as stern as fate.

"The lonely sunsets flame and die,
The giant valleys gulp the night,
The monster mountains scrape the sky
Where eager stars are diamond bright."

CHAPTER XV.

"WHERE THE BEST IS LIKE THE WORST"

WE had reached Sakulévo on the afternoon of the twenty-fourth of November. On the morning of the twenty-fifth we started to work. On the other side of the river was a cluster of tents. It was a field dressing-station and, appropriate to its name, was located in a muddy field. Since Sakulévo was at this time some thirty kilometers from the fighting, our work consisted of evacuations, that is back of the line work, the most uninteresting an *ambulancier* is called upon to do, since it wholly lacks excitement. Here it was made more trying because of the fearful roads over which our route lay. At this time the village of Eclusier, some forty kilometers southeast of Sakulévo was rail head and to this point we evacuated our wounded. It was a matter of three and a half hours of the most trying sort of driving. Perhaps a better idea of our work at Sakulévo may be had if we go together on a "run." It's seven-thirty in the morning, a cold raw morning with ice on the pools and a skim of ice on the inside of the tent. The sun has not long appeared over the snow-clad mountains

and there is little warmth in its rays. We have just had breakfast—heaven save the name—some black coffee and army bread—so it's time to be off. The crank up—a none too easy performance, since the motors are as stiff witht cold as we are, and then toss and bump our way across the little bridge disregarding a sign which, in five languages, bids us "go slowly." A couple of hundred meters farther on in a field at the left of the road is a group of tents, before which whips a sheet of canvas displaying a red cross. It is the field dressing-station. We turn the car, put on all power and plough through a mire and then out upon more solid ground, stopping in front of the tents. A short, stocky soldier with a heavy beard and the general aspect of Santa Claus comes out.

We exchange salutes: *"Ça va?"* he queries.

"Toujours, et vous?"

"Bien, merci."

The formalities, which no matter what the stress are never omitted, being over, business commences.

"Many *blessés?"* you inquire.

"Yes, many"; he answers. "Last night there was an attack; you heard the guns? *Il'y'a tout couchés."*

So, since all your passengers will be stretcher cases, you pull down your third rack, assemble your stretchers and arrange your blankets. A number of wounded have now come out of the tent and are standing about. Later they will be removed as *assis* or sitting cases, but first the more urgent cases must be evacuated.

One chap, in the peculiar yellow-green uniform of the Zouave attracts your attention. He is very large for a Frenchman, close to six feet. His head is swathed in bandages and his right arm is in a sling. Across his tunic is a row of decoration and service ribbons which show him to be a professional soldier. Above his sergeant's chevron is already one wound stripe.

"Bonjour, camrade," he greets.

"Bonjour, sergeant," you respond, "hit badly?"

"Ah, ça ne fait rien, but now I shall not be able to face them for two months."

At this moment two German prisoners, carrying a stone boat, pass by within six feet of us. The colonial's lips draw back like the unsheathing of a bayonet, his eyes fairly stab and his unbandaged hand opens and closes, as though gripping a throat. *"Sales cochons,"* he mutters. *"Nom de Dieu,* how I hate them." The prisoners pass placidly by and you feel it is well that your friend cannot have his way with them.

Now the tent flap opens and two *brancardiers* appear, bearing between them a stretcher upon which lies a limp figure covered with a dirty blanket. A gray-green sleeve dangles from the stretcher and shows your first passenger is a German. He is slid into place and by this time your second passenger is ready. He is a giant Senegalese with a punctured lung. Your third man is a *sous-officier* whose right leg has just been amputated. He has been given a

shot of morphine and his eyes are glazed in stupor. The third stretcher is shot home, the tail board put up and the rear curtain clamped down. Over these roads we can take no more, so we are ready for the start.

Through the slough and then out upon the road, which is little more, we go. Through war's traffic we pick our way, beside shell-laden camions, pack trains, carts, past stolid lines of Russians, dodging huge English lorries whose crews of Tommies sing out a friendly "are we downhearted?" Between rows of Bulgar and Boche prisoners your way is made, the hooter sounding out its demand for the rights of a loaded ambulance. Along the road-side, out there in the fields, sprinkled everywhere, we see the little wooden crosses, war's aftermath. Everywhere war's material wastage is apparent. Wrecked wagons and motors, dead mules, hopelessly mired carts, military equipment, smashed helmets, dented *douilles*. Your way is lined with these. The road from there on becomes freer but is still too rough to permit much quickening of speed. As we turn a bend a frenzied Italian comes charging across the fields. He seems greatly excited about something and unwinds reels of vowels not one word of which we understand. We try him in English and French, not one word of which he understands, so finally we give it up and go on, leaving him to his *"que dises."*

Through two passes, in which the white low-hanging

clouds close down, through several deserted villages over a road which, save in the Balkans, would be considered impassable, we carry our load. It is impossible to prevent lurching and the black within groans and cries aloud in his pain. The Boche, too, when there is an exceptionally bad bit, moans a little, but the *sous-officier* makes not a sound throughout the voyage. At one point the road passes near the railroad and, dangling over a ravine, we can see the remains of a fine iron bridge dynamited during the great retreat. At last, rounding the jutting point of a hill, we see far below us the blue waters and barren shores of Lake Petersko. Squatted beside the lake is a little village, Sorovicevo. Railhead and our destination, the station of Eclusier, lies a mile or so to the west. Down the hill we brake our way, then over a kilometer of wave-like road into a slough, where for a time it seems we are destined to stick, and at last the tossed and moaning load is brought to a stop at the *hôpital d'évacuation,* a large cluster of tents. We assist in removing the wounded—the Senegalese is gray now, with the shadow of death upon him and his breath gushes with great sobs through his torn lung. The Frenchman and Boche seem to have come through all right.

It is now eleven-thirty o'clock and we are probably becoming conscious that we could use a little food, but it will be at least two hours before we can reach camp, so we get out a spark-plug wrench and break

up several army biscuits to munch on the way home. En route we are hailed by three Tommies who have been left behind and are seeking to join their detachment. They desire a lift so we take them aboard and are repaid by hearing their whimsical comments on the "filthy country." It is nearly two o'clock—a blow-out has delayed us—when we reach camp and the motor has barely stopped churning before we are in the mess tent clamoring for our "dum-dums"—beans—and "singe", tinned beef. You will find your appetite has not suffered because of the "run."

The days were rapidly growing colder. Our tents were sheathed with ice and the snow foot crept far down the mountains each night. We got our sheepskin coats and inserted an extra blanket in our sleeping bags. Each night we drained our radiators to prevent damage from freezing. The few sweets we had brought with us had now given out. In the French army save for a little sugar—very little—and occasionally—very occasionally—a small amount of apple preserve, no sweets are issued. It was impossible to purchase any, so presently there set in that craving for sugar which was to stay with us through the long winter. The arrival of Thanksgiving, with its memories of the laden tables at home, did not help matters much. Dinner consisted of lentils—my own particular aversion—boiled beef, bread, red wine and black coffee. However, the day was made happy by the arrival of our first mail and we feasted on letters.

It's wonderful what a cheering effect the arrival of the post had on us. Throughout the winter it was about our only comfort. In France it had been welcome but down in the Orient we seemed so cut off from the world that letters were a luxury, the link with the outside. When they came it didn't so much matter than a man was cold or hungry and caked with mud, that the quarters leaked and the snow drifted in on his blankets. The probability of its arrival was an unfailing source of pleasurable conjecture, its arrival the signal for whoops and yowls, its failure, the occasion for gloom and pessimism.

Some fifteen kilometers to the north and west of Sakulévo was the large town of Florina, the northernmost town of Macedonia. Here was located a large field hospital. At the hospital, for a time, we maintained a post of two cars on five day shifts.

We found Florina one of the most interesting towns in the Balkans. Long under the rule of the Turk, it possessed a distinctly Oriental aspect which gave it charm. It nestled at the foot of some high hills which had been the scene of heavy fighting in the dispute for its possession. The town itself had suffered little, if any, in the fighting. Its long main street followed a valley, turning and twisting. Booths and bazaars lined the thoroughfare and in places vines had been trained to cover it. There were innumerable tiny Turkish cafés, *yogart* shops, little shops where beaten copper ware was hammered out, other booths where

old men worked on wooden pack saddles for burros. There were artisans in silver and vendors of goat's wool rugs. The streets were always alive with "the passing show," for the normal population of fifteen thousand souls had been greatly augmented by the influx of refugees from Monastir. There was an air of unreality about the place, an indefinable theatricalism which gave one the sense of being part of a play, a character, and of expecting on rounding a corner, to see an audience and then to hear the playing of the orchestra.

It was while on duty at the hospital at Florina that I made the first run into Monastir. My journal for December 2nd reads: "At one o'clock this afternoon received orders to proceed to Monastir *en raison de service*. My passengers were two corporals. It has been a cold, overcast day, the clouds hanging low over the snow-capped mountains. A cold, penetrating wind hit us in the face as we drew away from the hospital.

"When the Florina road joins the main caravan road to Monastir, we passed from Macedonia into Serbia. Here we turned sharply toward the north. The flat fields on either side were cut up with trenches, well made, deep ones, from which the enemy was driven less than a fortnight ago, and shallow rifle pits which the French and Serbs had used in the advance. Even now, so soon after their evacuation, they were half filled with water. Everywhere there was evidence of big

gun fire and in one place where we crossed a bridge the ground for yards about was an uninterrupted series of craters. For the first time in the war I saw piles of enemy shells and shell cases showing that his retreat had been unpremeditated and hasty. In one place stood a dismantled field piece.

"About a quarter of an hour after leaving Florina, we reached the village of Negocani. There had been heavy fighting here and many of the houses had been reduced to piles of dobe bricks. Two miles away to the road, we could discern the remains of another village, Kenali, where the enemy made his last stand before falling back upon Monastir the other day. The sound of the guns had all the while been growing louder and not far beyond Negocani I caught my first glimpse of the minarets of Monastir. It had been two months since I was under fire and I had some curiosity as to how it would affect me. Before reaching the environs of the city it became apparent that this curiosity would not long remain unsatisfied, for ahead we could see the smoke and dust from bursting shells. Approaching the city, the way becomes a regular road, quite the best I have yet seen in the Balkans. I was speculating on this marvel when, perhaps, five hundred yards ahead, a columnar mass of earth spouted into the air. The whirring of speeding *éclat* had scarcely ceased when another came in slightly nearer. The road was under fire and that same old prickly feeling shot up my spine, the same "gone" sensation moved in and

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took possession of my insides. Suddenly the familiar sound pervaded the air. There was the crash as though of colliding trains and not forty meters away the earth by the roadside vomited into the air. In another second the débris and *éclat* rained all about us, showering the car. The shell was a good-sized one—at least a 150, and we owed our lives to the fact that, striking in soft ground, the *éclat* did not radiate. Meanwhile, I had not waited for the freedom of the city to be presented. The machine was doing all that was in her and in a few seconds more we shot by the outlying buildings. The fire zone seemed to be restricted to the entering road and the extreme fringe of the city and when we reached the main street, though we could hear the shells passing over, none struck near. Within the city our batteries, planted all about, were in action and the whirring of our own shells was continuously sounding overhead.

"We parked in a filth-strewn little square lined with queer exotic buildings. While I waited for the corporals to perform their mission, I talked with an Algerian Zouave who lounged in the doorway. He pointed out where a shell had struck this morning, killing three men, two civilians and a soldier. He further informed me that the streets of the city were in full view of the enemy who occupied the hills just beyond its outskirts. This revelation was most disconcerting to me, for I had no desire to work up a "firing acquaintance." A number of officers of high

rank passed—among them a three-star general. A colonel of infantry stopped, shook hands with me and spoke appreciatively of the work of the Corps in France, saying he was glad to welcome a car in the Orient.

"By three o'clock we were ready. My passenger list was augmented by a lieutenant, *medecin,* who wished to reach Florina. He cautioned me with much earnestness to *"allez vite"* when we should reach this shelled zone, a caution wholly unnecessary as I had every intention of going as far as Providence and gasoline would let me. The firing now—praise to Allah—had slackened and only an occasional shell was coming in. So, making sure the engine was functioning properly, I tuned up and a second later we were going down the road as though "all hell and a policeman" were after us.

"We reached Florina without mishaps. Tonight there is a full moon. Don and I strolled down into the town. It was singularly beautiful, the white minarets standing out against the sombre mountains, the silvery light flooding the deserted streets. We strayed into one of the tiny little cafés. It was a cozy place. Divans covered with rugs and sheepskins lined the walls. A few befezzed old men sat cross-legged on these, sat there silently smoking giant *hookahs* and sipping their syrupy coffee. We, too, ordered coffee and then sat in the silence helping in the thinking. After a while the door opened and a short, hairy man

entered. He was clad in long white wool drawers, around which below the knee were wound black thongs. On his feet were queer-shaped shoes which turned sharply up at the end and were adorned with black pom-poms. He wore a short jacket embroidered with tape, and thrown back from his shoulders was a rough wool cape. Around his waist was wound a broad sash into which was thrust a revolver and a long-bladed dirk. About his neck and across his breast were hung many silver chains, which jingled when he moved. His head was surmounted by a white brimless hat. He talked in an unknown tongue to the *patron* and then, bowing low to us, was gone amid a clinking of metal. This strange looking individual was—so we learned from the café's proprietor—an Albanian, a man learned in the ways of the mountains, a scout in the employ of the French.

"We sipped another coffee, smoked a cigarette and then, bowing to the old men, went out into the moonlit street, leaving them to their meditations. As I write this from the tent, the sky is darkening, a chill wind sweeps down from the snow and gutters the candle. I am glad that our blankets are many."

As the days went by, our camp site, where we were the first comers, began to assume the aspect of a boom mining town. Several camion sections appeared. Numerous *avitailement* groups moved in. Tents and nondescript structures of earth and ammunition boxes sprang up. Across the river ten thousand Russians

were encamped and all night their singing came to us beautifully across the water. All day and all night war's traffic ground and creaked by us. The lines had shaken down; the two forces were now entrenched, facing each other just beyond Monastir and the transport was accumulating munitions for an offensive. In the first camp opposite long lines of Serbian carts, carts such as Adam used to bring the hay in, struggled. The sad-faced burros plodded by, loaded with everything from bread to bodies. Soldiers, French, Italian, Serb and Russian slogged by. But this activity was confined to the narrow zone of the roads. Beyond, the grim, desolate country preserved its lonesomeness and impressed upon the soul of man the bleakness and harshness of a land forlorn. For the most part the days were gray and sombre, with low-hanging clouds which frequently gave out rain and sleet and caused the river to rise so that more than once we were in danger of being flooded out. But occasionally there would be a clear morning, when the clouds were driven back and the rising sun would light the mountains, turning the snow to rose and orange. We were growing very tired of the evacuation work, of the long, weary runs. There was no excitement to tinge the monotony. We were becoming "fed up." The Squad, therefore, hailed with joy the news that the Section was to move up to Monastir and there take up the front line work.

Though the exact date of our departure was not

announced we knew it would be soon and we commenced at once to make ready. Helmets once more became items of interest and motors were tested with an interest born of empirical knowledge that the fire zone was no place to make repairs. Everybody brightened up; interest and optimism pervaded the camp. And then the word came that we should leave on the seventeenth of December.

CHAPTER XVI

MONASTIR: HELL'S CAPITAL

MEN stumbled about in the darkness falling over tent pegs or pulling at icy ropes. Now and then a motor in response to frantic cranking, coughed, sputtered and then "died." Down near the cook tent someone was swearing earnestly and fervently at the mud. It was three o'clock in the morning and the only light was that given off by the stars. The Squad was breaking camp and we were to be in Monastir, twenty-five kilometers distant, before daybreak. Somehow in spite of the darkness, the tents were struck and packed and the cars rolled out on the bumpy roads.

Our orders issued the night before were: (1) every man to wear his helmet, gas masks to be slung; (2) on reaching a designated spot five kilometers outside of Monastir, to extinguish all lights; (3) thereafter cars to maintain intervals of a hundred metres, so that if shelled, one shell would not get more than one car; (4) in the event of losing the convoy after entering the city, to stop, unless under fire, at the point where the car preceding was last seen.

With the assistance of our lights we were able to hold a good pace until we reached the dip in the road which had been designated as the point where the convoy should halt. Here we extinguished all our lights and made sure that everything was right. Ahead we could see flashes, but whether from our own guns or bursting shells we could not determine. The sound of firing came plainly to our ears. The cars now got away at fifteen seconds' intervals. A faint, gray light was showing in the east, just permitting a dim vision of the car ahead. At the entrance to the city in a particularly exposed spot, there was some confusion while the leading machine circled about in an endeavor to pick the right street, then we were off again, heading for the northeast quarter of the city. Crossing a small wall-confined stream by a fragile wooden bridge, we wound and twisted through a maze of crooked streets, and finally just as the first glow lightened the minarets, came to a halt in a narrow street. Where my car stopped was a shattered house and the street was carpeted with débris, the freshness of which testified to the fact that the shells causing the damage must have come in not long before. Even as I clambered out of the machine two shells crashed in somewhere over in another street.

Our cantonment consisted of two five-roomed, two-storied Turkish houses which stood within a small walled compound. The top floors, or attics, of these houses were free from partitions and gave just suffi-

cient space for our beds, ranged around the walls. The place was clean and dry and though, of course, there was no heat and no glass in the windows, it was infinitely better than the tents. The rooms below were used for the mess, the galley, and for the French staff, and one room which had windows and a stove was set aside for a lounge. The "C. O." occupied a small stone building which formed part of the compound wall, a sort of porter's lodge. Beneath the houses were semi-cellars, and in one of these we stored the spare gas and oil. The cars were at first parked along a narrow, blind street which extended a short distance directly in front of quarters. As it was ascertained, however, that here they were in plain view of the enemy, they were moved back on another street and sheltered from sight by intervening buildings. The *atelier* was established in a half-demolished shed about 200 yards up the street from the compound.

Our quarters were situated about midway between two mosques. In front of one of these mosques which faced on a tiny square hung a tattered Red Cross flag, betokening a field dressing-station. Here we got our wounded. The lines at this time were just beyond the outskirts of the city, and the wounded were brought directly from the trenches to this mosque, from whence it was our work to carry them back to the field hospitals out of range of the guns. I doubt if there ever was a more bizarre *poste* than this of the

mosque. The trappings and gear of Mohammedanism remained intact. The *muezzin's* pulpit draped with its chain of wooden beads looked down on the wounded men lying on the straw-carpeted floor. On the walls, strange Turkish characters proclaimed the truths of the Koran. The little railed enclosure, wherein the faithful were wont to remove their sandals before treading the sacred ground, now served as a *bureau.* All was the same, save that now the walls echoed, not the *muezzin's* nasal chant, but the groans of wounded men who called not on Allah, but on God.

At first we found the twisted streets very confusing. They rarely held their direction for more than a hundred yards and their narrowness prevented any "observation for position." There seemed no names or identifications either for streets or quarters, and did one inquire the way of some befezzed old Turk, the reply would be *"Kim bilir? Allah"*—Who knows? God. But gradually we grew to know these ways until on the darkest of nights we could make our way through the mazy blackness.

The city sprawled about on a more or less level plain at one end of the long valley which extended southward to the Macedonian frontier. Some of its houses straggled up the hills which rose immediately back of the city proper. Beyond these hills rose the mountains from which at a distance of two kilometers the enemy hurled down his hate. The normal popu-

lation of Monastir was perhaps fifty thousand souls, a population of that bastard complexity found only in the Balkans. When we reached the city, a month after its capture and occupation by the French, something like forty thousand of this civilian population yet remained, the others having fled to Florina or gone even farther south. Conditions were still unsettled. Daily, spies were led out to be shot, and we were warned not to wander unarmed in the remote sections. Snipers, from the protection of covered houses, shot at passing soldiers and at night it was unsalubrious to go about. Lines were drawn about the town and none but military transport permitted to pass. Famine prices prevailed. In the bazaars, captured dogs were butchered and offered for sale. A few stores remained open. Above their doors were signs in the queer, jumpy characters of the Serbian alphabet, signs which it would take a piccolo artist to decipher. Within, matches were sold for half a *drachmi* (10c) a box, eggs, 7 *drachmi* a dozen, and sugar at 6 *drachmi* a kilo. All moneys, save Bulgar, were accepted; the *drachmi,* the *piaster,* the *franc,* the *lepta,* the *para,* but the exchange was as complicated as a machine gun, and no man not of the Tribe of Shylock could hope to solve its mysteries.

Though most of the houses were closed and shut tered as protection against shell splinters, life seemed to go on much as usual. There was no traffic in the streets, save at night when the army transports came

through, or when our machines went by with their loads, but the populace passed and repassed, bartered and ordered its life with the phlegmatic fatalism of the Easterner. The enemy from his point of vantage saw every move in the city. His guns commanded its every corner. His surveys gave him the range to an inch. Daily he raked it with shrapnel and pounded it with high explosive. No man in Monastir seeing the morning's sun, but knew that, ere it set, his own might sink. At any time of the day or night the screeching death might come, did come. Old men, old women, little children were blown to bits, houses were demolished, and yet, because it was decreed by Allah, it was inexorable. The civil population went its way. Of course when shells came in there was terror, panic, a wailing and gnashing of teeth, for not even the fatalism of Mohammed could be proof against such sights. And horrible sights these were. It was nothing to go through the streets after a bombardment and see mangled and torn bodies; a man with his head blown off; a little girl dead, her face staring upward, her body pierced by a dozen wounds; a group in grotesque attitudes, with, perhaps an arm or a leg torn off and thrown fifty feet away. These in Monastir were daily sights.

One afternoon I remember as typical. It was within a few days of Christmas, though there was little of Yuletide in the atmosphere. At home, the cars were bearing the signs, "Do Your Christmas Shopping

Early," but here in Monastir, where, as "Doc" says "a chap was liable to start out full of peace and good will and come back full of shrapnel and shell splinters," there was little inducement to do Christmas shopping. Nevertheless we started on one of those prowling strolls in which we both delighted. We rambled through the tangled streets, poked into various odd little shops in quest of the curious, dropped into a hot milk booth where we talked with some English speaking Montenegrins, and then finally crossed one of the rickety wooden bridges which span the city's bisecting stream. By easy stages, stopping often to probe for curios, we reached the main street of the city. Here at a queer little bakery, where the proprietor shoved his products into a yawning stove oven with a twelve-foot wooden shovel, we got, for an outrageous price, some sad little cakes. As we munched these, we stood on a corner and watched the scene about us. It was a fine day, the first sunny one we had experienced in a long time. Many people were in the streets, a crowd such as only war and the Orient could produce: a sprinkling of soldiers, mostly French although occasionally a Russian or an Italian was noticed; a meditative old Turk, stolid Serbian women, little children—a lively, varied picture. Our cakes consumed, "Doc" and I crossed the street and a short way along a transverse street, stopped to watch the bread line. There were possibly three hundred people, mostly women, gathered here waiting for the dis-

tribution of the farina issued by the military to the civil population. For a while we watched them, and then, as the street ahead looked as if it might yield something interesting in booths, we continued along it. In another fifty yards, however, its character changed; it became residential and so we turned to retrace our steps. Fortunate for us it was that we made the decision. We had gone back perhaps a dekameter, when we heard the screech. We sprang to the left hand wall and flattened ourselves against it as the crash came. It was a 155 H. E. Just beyond, at the point toward which we had been making our way, the whole street rose into the air. We sped around the corner to the main street. It was a mass of screaming, terror-stricken people. In quick succession three more shells came in, one knocking "Doc" off his feet with its concussion. The wall by which we had stood and an iron shutter close by were rent and torn with *éclat*. One of these shells had struck near the bread line. How many were killed I never knew. "Doc" for the moment had disappeared, and I was greatly worried until I saw him emerge from an archway. There was now a lull in the shelling. All our desire for wandering about the city had ceased. We started back towards quarters. Before we were half way there, more shells came in, scattered about the city, though the region about the main street seemed to be suffering most. Crossing the stream, we saw the body of a man hanging half over the wall and

nearby, the shattered paving where the shell had struck.

In such an atmosphere we lived. Each day brought its messages of death. On December 19th, I saw a spy taken out to be shot. On the 20th, a house next to quarters was hit. Two days later, when evacuating under shrapnel fire, I saw two men killed. Constantly we had to change our route through the city because of buildings blown into the street.

Our work was done before the coming of light in order that the moving machines might not draw the enemy's fire. One morning, the 21st of December, a dark wet morning, thick as the plot of a problem play, I had gotten my load, and had left Monastir behind. As I entered the little village of Negocani, where the road bends sharply to the left, I beheld in the dim half-light the figure of a man. As I drew near he flashed a torch and extended his arms. I threw on the brake, brought the car to a standstill, and peering out over the shrapnel hood looked into the eyes of—George. George whom I last saw as we left Verdun last July. We had crossed together in 1915, had served together on the Aisne, on the Somme and throughout those trying days at the Vortex. Then he had left to return to the States. Rejoining the Corps in November, he had been sent out to fill the place left vacant by Sortwell's death, had come up from Salonika to Florina by rail, had reached Negocani the night before on an Italian camion, and here

he was, adrift in the wretched Serbian village trying to locate the Section. I dare say two people never were more delighted to meet. We pounded each other on the back and made strange noises till my *blessés* exclaimed in wonder. I drove on to the village of Kenelic, just over the Macedonian line, where was located the field hospital to which we were then evacuating, and after discharging my wounded, returned to Negocani for George. He brought news from home, from Paris, Christmas packages, and the football scores. There were five Yale men in the Squad and when they learned that Yale had triumphed over both Harvard and Princeton, the noise that went up caused passing citizens to scuttle for cover.

On "the night before Christmas" we hung up our coarse woolen stockings for each other to fill, and there was some speculation as to whether the morrow would bring the usual shelling. Dawn of the day had not come before we heard our batteries sending their message of Christmas hate. In the cheerless dimness of early morning we gathered around the coffee urn and wished each other *"Bon Noël."* Far away, we knew the sun was shining on peaceful homes, cheery towns, beautiful women, happy children. Here it struggled up over the mountains, lighted the minarets and looked down on a city stricken with war. It saw bedraggled, helmeted soldiers leading weary pack mules over pitted, sloughy streets, veiled women gliding along in the shelter of mud walls, masked batteries,

starved, pitiful children, pariah dogs feasting on dead horses, long lines of trenches, filled with half frozen men, débris-cluttered spaces where shells had fallen. The sun looked down and wondered if this could be the anniversary of Christ's birth.

Towards nine o'clock our batteries ceased firing. The enemy's guns, too, were silent, and we hoped this presaged a quiet day. Four of us decided on a bath and made our way over toward the ancient, arched stone structure where generations of Turks had performed their ablutions. It was a Turkish bath, but picture not to yourself a sunny "hot room," needle showers and limpid pools, for the real Turkish bath is a vault-like chamber reached by double doors which serve to shut in the air which has been in captivity since the walls were reared. Around the walls are a number of shallow stone basins, into which trickles tepid water. After disrobing, the bather throws this water over himself, using for the purpose a small copper bowl. We brought our own towels, otherwise we might have had to resort to limp cloths by no means resembling our conception of Turkish towels. Such is a real Turkish bath.

Emerging on to the street we visited a hot milk booth. Some of us were already acquiring the *yogart* habit. *Yogart* is fermented goat's milk, and when it comes to flourishing, it is the green bay tree of the Balkans. It waxeth loud in the land. The taste for *yogart* is strictly an acquired one, but once one becomes

a "yogartist" he wades into the product with all the enthusiasm of a newly converted golf fiend. *Yogart* possesses the unique property of mixing well with anything. Thus it is made better by adding sugar, or chocolate, or jam, or honey, and I even caught "Buster" one day stirring in macaroni.

We had left the *yogart* palace and were on our way back to quarters. As was natural, our talk was of the night's dinner, at which two plum puddings, brought from France, were to appear prominently. Report had it too, that other delicacies would be forthcoming; it was to be a regular "burst." There was a distant whistle, increasing to a crescendo screech, and we "froze in our tracks." Two seconds, and over in the direction of quarters there was the crash of the explosion.

Monastir is a city without cellars, a city for the most part of flimsy mud walls, through which an *obus* crashes like a hammer through an eggshell. About all one can hope for in a bombardment is that by sticking close to a house the smaller *éclat* may be stopped. We had plenty of time to realize this as we flattened out against a building, on the other side of which was a gaping hole, the result of a former bombardment. As we lay there, we speculated as to the welfare of the fellows at quarters, for the shells all seemed to be falling in that locality. We speculated on the size of the missiles, deciding that they were 155 H. E., and

finally we speculated on whether they were coming nearer. Up to that time they had been dropping at a distance which we estimated as possibly three hundred yards. Now they seemed to be coming nearer. We accordingly moved, going down towards the center of the city, where we once more became "wall-flowers." We were particularly disgusted. To be strafed on Christmas Day, "mustered for foreign service," before the only real meal in months, was surely the refinement of cruelty, worthy of the Huns. There was no help for this, however, and so, while the people at home were on their way to church, we lay beside a mud wall in a Balkan town, liable any minute "to go out" without benefit of clergy, and wondered, perhaps, if after all the "life of safety first" was not preferable.

Suddenly, as suddenly as it had begun, the firing ceased. We consulted our watches; it lacked five minutes to mid-day. The bombardment had lasted one hour and twenty-five minutes, during which time about one hundred and fifty shells had come in. The shelled area was about a quarter of a mile square. The enemy was after a particularly troublesome seventy-five battery which had its station about two hundred yards from our compound. His efforts had been successful, the battery having been silenced, two of the guns being put entirely out of commission. We started for quarters with considerable apprehension as to what we should find. The streets which at the first shell had been depopulated were now swarming again, and it

was "business as usual." We were immensely relieved on reaching the compound to find quarters intact. The yard and house had been showered with *éclat* but no one had been hit.

The noon meal was not half over before the shelling was resumed. This time a battery on the southeastern edge of the city was catching it. From our attic windows we watched the shells strike and the columns of smoke and mud mount into the air. For perhaps an hour this continued and then quiet fell, broken only by the occasional fire of our guns. The day had become gray and dull. The sun, as though saddened by such a spirit on Christmas, withdrew behind thick clouds. As the afternoon advanced, the firing on both sides grew less and less, until when night fell only the intermittent rap of a machine gun broke the silence.

Somehow the dinner was not a great success. I think we were all just a bit homesick. Not even the plum puddings aroused our spirits. There was only one toast—"To the folks back there." The choruses lacked vim. "She wore it for her lover who was far, far away" served only to emphasize the feeling that, though we might not be "lovers," still we *were far, far away,* and "When I Die" possessed such potential possibilities that it quickly "died." So I think we were all rather glad when the day was over and we could crawl into our flea-bags and forget it was Christmas.

The Huns seemed determined to make the last days of the old year memorable for Monastir. Day

by day the shelling increased. The city crumbled about us. Some of the streets were blocked with fallen houses. Few of the stores or booths were now open. The population remained within their frail walls and were killed in their homes. The Franco-Serbian Bank was blown into the street. As someone remarked, a check drawn on it would be returned marked not "no funds," but "no bank." The bakery where we had bought little cakes was reduced to a pile of rubbish, its proprietor buried beneath. I went around to get some silver work I had ordered from an artisan, to find his place no longer existed. It was wiped out by a single shell. On the 28th of December the enemy shelled throughout the night. The following day we had five cars partially demolished, my own among the number. Its sides were blown in and the entire machine was plastered with blood and strips of human flesh, the shell which did the damage having torn to shreds a little girl who was standing by it at the time. In all the war I have seen no more horrible sight than that of the child's family gathering the still warm particles of flesh, finding here a hand, there a finger or a foot, the while moaning in anguish, and then rolling on the ground. The scene was appalling.

On the 30th of December, we began to excavate a dug-out beneath our quarters. The shelling was now almost continuous, and this lent impetus to the work. We dug the shelter in the form of a cross, seven feet deep and with a roof of banked timber. It would

not have survived a direct hit, even of a 77, but it was splinter-proof and at least it took our minds off the shelling.

I was hard at work on this *abri* when I was told that the Commander wanted to see me in his quarters. He greeted me with his usual winning courtesy, and without wasting time on preliminaries, informed me that that there was a call for two cars to serve the division now occupying Southern Albania; that I had been selected to take one of these cars through—the one going to the most advanced post—and would have a reserve driver "in case anything happened." My orders were to leave the same afternoon, taking sufficient oil and gas for three hundred kilometers, and to report to the Commanding Officer at Florina for further instructions.

I at once set about preparing for the trip. It was uncomfortable working on the car as the afternoon shelling was at its height, but by four o'clock all was ready and, after taking on some wounded at the mosque, I scuttled out of town, headed for Florina.

It was nearly nine o'clock the next morning, the last day of the old year, before we finally got away and drove down the long, winding main street of Florina headed towards the mountains. Just beyond the town, the road turns towards the west and begins to rise.

The main road from Southern Serbia into Albania runs from Monastir almost due west, skirting Lake Prespa. Across this road, however, stretched the

enemy's line. To hold Southern Albania and flank the Austro-Bulgarian army, the French had thrown a division of troops across the mountains, advancing from Florina by the little-used trail over which we were now making our way. A number of attempts had been made to get motors across the divide—our own cars had twice essayed the task but without avail. The grade was terrific. The trail clung to the mountain sides and wound its way almost perpendicularly upward. Rains, snows and the supply trains of an army had kneaded the soil into a quagmire. Motors bucked this, stalled, bucked again, mired and finally had to be dug out, to abandon the attempt.

But those other cars had neglected to bring with them the one thing that could get them across: they had neglected to provide themselves with a real live general. With commendable foresight we had stocked up with "one general"—the Commander of the Albanian Division seeking to join his command. With such a tool in our locker there could be no doubt of the success of our attempt. The first time we mired, he displayed his usefulness. Hastily commandeering the services of all the soldiers in sight, he ordered them to leave their various tasks of road-building, mule-driving, etc., and to get their shoulders against the cars. Then with a tremendous *"alle, hup,"* a grinding and heaving, we pulled out and struggled on and upward for several metres. It was slow work. Time and again we were mired and had to be dug out.

Sometimes we even dropped back to get a start and then charged the mud with every bit of gas the throttle gave. But always at the end of an hour we were a little farther on. By two o'clock, when we stopped to eat some sardines and bread, we had ascended to a height of fifty-four thousand feet above sea level, and were on top of the Divide. The surface here was more solid, for the snow froze as it fell, and with chains, the wheels gripped.

During the afternoon we worked our way down on a trail from which a sheer wall rose on one side, and the other dropped away into nothingness. Often, passing traffic forced us to hang literally with two wheels clinging to the edge, where, had the brakes slipped, we would have been classed among "the missing." The sun had long made its westing, and a half-gloom filled the valleys when we came to a pocket in the mountains. On the opposite side of a gorge through which rushed a stream, were clustered a number of stone houses, clinging to the mountain side. It was the forlorn village of Zelova. We parked the cars in a small open space by the roadside, and crossing the stream, clambered up among the houses. There were one or two pitiful little stores, but they were without stocks. There was even a one-roomed café, but although this was New Year's Eve, there seemed no demand for tables, perhaps because there were no drinks of any sort to put on those tables. The few villagers we saw were a depressed-looking lot, as in-

deed they well might be. The murky huts offered very little cheer, so I spread my blankets in the ambulance. Outside the snow was coming down and drifting against the side of the car. 1916 was dying but I was too weary to await the obsequies, and was soon asleep.

Shortly after daybreak we roused out. The snow was still swishing through the paths, blotting out all but the nearest objects. By eight o'clock we were en route, and following the course of the stream, we reached a narrow valley. The brook had now assumed the proportions of a small river, and, because of the configuration of the ground, we were forced to cross it time and time again. There were no bridges, and each time as we charged through the water we expected to be checked by the flooding of the carburetor.

About ten o'clock the snow ceased to fall, and occasionally the sun looked out on a scene grandly beautiful. For the first time we entered a region partly forested. Stunted oaks grew on the mountain side and along the river were poplars. We were entering a more populous country. We saw numbers of queerly-costumed people. Mostly, they were clad in white homespun wool, embroidered with vivid reds and greens. Farther on, we passed into a region more barren and desolate than any we had yet encountered, a region of towering cliffs and stone strewn ground, devoid of all verdure. Shortly afterward we passed another stone village, Smesdis. Five or six kilometers

beyond the road, which all this time had been terrible, suddenly became better. Though no boulevard, it seemed so by contrast, and, since we no longer had to push the car, we regarded our troubles as over.

We had now emerged from the mountains and were in a considerable valley. At noon we entered a good-sized village, Beclista. We were now in Albania having crossed the frontier somewhere between Beclista and Smesdis. To our surprise, there was a sort of restaurant near where we had stopped our cars, and here we were able to obtain a stew of mysterious and obscure composition, together with some very good corn bread.

At Beclista the other car remained. My orders were to continue on to Coritza and accordingly, at one o'clock, I again set out, Vive accompanying me as a reserve driver. The snow had once more begun to fall but the way had so much improved that we were able to proceed at a fair speed. The road led through a broad valley, which in summer must be very beautiful. On either side, mountains stretched away in serried ranks. Here the Comitaje had their lairs, from which they issued to raid and terrorize the country round about. The whole of Albania is infested with these mountain bandits. They were constantly making sallies against isolated detachments of the transport, swooping on the men before they could defend themselves, plundering the supplies and then making off into the mountains where no man could follow. In

Albania, every man went armed and a soldier found without his gun was subject to arrest. On leaving the General at Beclista, he had directed that I be armed with a carbine, besides the army revolver which I already carried, and the gun thereafter always hung beside the driving-seat.

As we drove along, we left consternation in our wake. Mountain ponies, forsaking habits of years, climbed imaginary trees and kicked their loads loose with a carefree *abandon* born of a great desire to be elsewhere. Terror-stricken peasants gave us one look and took to the fields. Bullock wagons went into "high" and attained a speed hitherto deemed impossible. We created a Sensation with a capital S. And well we might, for we were the first motor to pass this way.

Towards four in the afternoon we were challenged by the outpost and, presenting our papers, were permitted to pass. A half mile beyond we again answered the *"Qui vive"* and then entered Coritza. An elephant pulling a baby-carriage up Fifth Avenue, would excite no greater wonder in New York than did our car rolling through the streets of Coritza. When we drew up in front of the *état major,* it became necessary to throw a cordon of troops about the machine to hold back the wondering, clamoring populace. Reporting to the officer in command, we were assigned quarters and the car was placed within the courtyard.

Coritza in many ways is a unique city. It is situated

Headquarters Were Established in Any Building That Offered Protection

One of the Cars That Bucked Its Way Through the "Impassable" Mountain Roads of Albania

about midway between the Adriatic and the Macedonian border, about one hundred and eighty kilometers from deep water and one hundred and fifty from a railroad. Normally it is reached by three caravan routes, the one from Florina over which we had just come, the trail from Monastir, and the road up from the Adriatic. These two latter were now closed, the Monastir trail by the Bulgar line, the other by the Comitaje. The houses, for the most part, are solid structures of gray stone, and some sections remind one strongly of a Scotch town. The streets are well surfaced and there are sidewalks made of stone slabs. The most prominent edifice in the city is a two-buttressed Greek church. The Turk, though long nominally exercising suzerainty over Albania, never succeeded in really conquering the country or in impressing his religion upon the people. There are but two mosques in the place and the atmosphere and aspect are much more occidental than oriental. From a *place,* formed by the junction of two broad avenues, radiate smaller streets, and on these are found the bazaars. Here are workers in silver and leather and copper; also iron-workers who seem constantly engaged in producing hand-wrought nails, and several artisans whose sole product is the long-bladed Albanian dirk. Besides the bazaars, there are a number of modern stores—hardware, grocery and two pharmacies, all well stocked. Everywhere is exposed for sale maize bread in cakes, slabs, squares and hunks.

Through the streets wandered an extraordinary, diverse crowd, displaying a strange admixture of costumes. There were a few veiled women, a few robed Turks, a few men clad in the European fashion of a decade ago, but the great majority of the people were in the native Albanian dress, the women in long, blue homespun coats, with red braid trimming, and multicolored aprons, their heads bound in blue cloths which were tied under the chin. Upon their legs they wore homespun stockings, dyed red or blue. The men, frequently bearded, wore red or white fezes without tassels and white short-waisted skirt coats, from the shoulders of which hung two embroidered wing-like appendages. Their baggy pantaloons were thrust into high white stockings. Upon their feet they wore, as did the women, curious red shoes which turned sharply up at the toes and were adorned with large black pompoms. About their middle was a broad leather girdle into which were thrust poinards. Some of these knives are really finely made with elaborate silver handles. Their owners set great store by them, and it is with difficulty that they can be induced to part with them. For an outer garment the Albanian wears a rough woolen cape with hood attachment which hangs from his shoulders to mid-leg. For ornaments, the more wealthy wear silver chains draped across the chest. The girls wear long loose bloomers, drawn in at the ankle. Both sexes of all ages smoke cigarettes. Big, lean, wolf-like dogs follow their masters around and

fight each other with great fervency. Also there are burros, millions of them.

We were much surprised that many of the people —more especially the storekeepers—had been to America and spoke English. When they learned we were Americans, they were delighted. The news quickly spread, and as we walked through the streets, the people crowded around us, shaking hands and inviting us to take tea. One storekeeper had been the proprietor of a dairy lunch in Washington at which I remembered I had eaten. Another had a brother who was a waiter in Washington's largest hotel. The barber had for five years worked in New Haven and had, perhaps, cut my hair when I was at Yale. It seemed queer enough to find these people in this remote mountain town.

After a few days Vive and I decided to move our quarters from the hospital to the inn which stood at a point formed by the junction of the two principal streets. Here we secured a commodious room, furnished with a charcoal brazier, a couple of chairs and two almost-beds. Upon the latter we spread our flea-bags, a case of *otium cum dignitate*. The inn was kept —or perhaps in the interest of accuracy I should say has existence—under the proprietorship of "Spiro." Spiro was his first name, his family name partaking of a complexity too intricate to dwell in the memory of one not imbued from birth with Albanian tribal genealogy. He was a man of sorrows, a victim of what

economists call "The ratio of exchange." In the café which occupied the ground floor of the inn, Spiro dispensed weird drinks to those whom war had rendered fearless of death. And the price of these drinks was such that five sous bought one. Now the exchange on French paper in Albania at this time was twelve sous on a five franc bill. But those that did patronize the tavern paid for their refreshment in notes of the denomination of five francs, demanding in return therefrom sous to the amount of ninety-five in change. Howbeit, it came to pass that Spiro did lose seven sous on every drink he did sell, besides the value of the drink. This situation, he confided to me, "makes me craz."

Though we had changed our quarters, we still messed with the *sous officiers* at the *ambulance*. With characteristic French courtesy, they insisted on giving us the best of everything and welcomed us as one of themselves. We shortly grew to know their individual characteristics and to feel entirely at home with them. We ate in a stone room, which had evidently been the kitchen of a considerable establishment. The table was waited on by the cook who, in the democratic way of the French army, took part in whatever discussion happened to be going forward. He was as comical a chap as ever I have seen, short in stature, with sparkling black eyes and a voice like the rumble of an artillery wheel. His nose was so large the burden of carrying it around seemed to have bowed his legs,

which were quaintly curved. His *béret* he wore at an astonishing angle curved down from a hump in the middle so that the headgear more nearly resembled a poultice. From somewhere he had secured a bright red waistcoat, the better which to display, he always appeared *sans* tunic.

Petit déjeuner we ate down in the town. Our breakfast consisted of boiled eggs, corn bread and Turkish coffee, and the amount of labor necessary to assemble this repast was about the same as required in getting up a thousand-plate banquet in New York. The mere buying of the eggs was in itself no small task, since the vendors refused to accept paper money, having, I suppose, seen too many paper governments rise and fall; and silver was very scarce, since it was horded and retired from circulation. The eggs once obtained, there remained the matter of their cooking. The science of boiling eggs seems never to have been understood or else is one of the lost arts in Albania, and we were forced to expound anew each morning this mystery to the pirate who presided over what the Coritzians ingenuously regard as a restaurant. Each morning we appeared with our hard-won eggs, Exhibit A, and made known that it would be pleasing to us could we have said eggs boiled and chaperoned by two cups of Turkish coffee, into which we proposed to stir some condensed milk, Exhibit B. The board of governors having considered this proposition, after some minutes usually reached the conclusion that this thing might be

done. *A la carte* orders, banquets and such extraordinary culinary rites as egg boiling were conducted in the cellar of the place, and thither our eggs would be conducted, it being necessary, owing to the absence of inside communication, for the proprietor to go outdoors, trudge around the corner and descend by an outside stairway. Through a crack in the floor, we could presently see our eggs in the process of cooking. At three minutes, having called time, they would be taken off, carried out into the street, around the corner, through a wondering throng at the door, and presently, if our luck held, we were actually confronted with a half dozen boiled eggs, a rare sight in Albania, judging from the interest their eating invoked. Such is breakfast in the Balkans.

Powers has described Albania as "a burlesque product of embarrassed diplomacy." The country was in the process of one of its burlesques. But a fortnight before, under the benevolent toleration of the French, it had proclaimed itself a republic and we found it in the travail of birth. Already a flag had been adopted, a paper currency established, self-appointed officials had assumed office, and an army which would have gladdened the eye of General Coxey was in formation. The whole affair was extraordinarily reminiscent of an *opera bouffé;* and, looking at these people—in many respects the most splendid in the Balkans—one could not but hope that the comedy might continue a comedy and not degenerate into bloody tragedy.

In the center of the town rose an ancient, square-walled tower, erected by the Turks. Now, the French maintained an outlook from this vantage point. The sector of Albania presented a unique situation, unparalleled at this time on any front. There were no trenches, in fact no sharply defined line between the opposing forces. The fighting consisted largely of cavalry skirmishes between the Chasseurs d'Afrique upon our side, mounted Comitaje on the other. These bandits were not regular troops but outlaws accoutered and supported by the Austrians. The difficult nature of the country and the absence of roads had prevented both sides from bringing up artillery, though rapid firers were from time to time brought into action, so that the fighting was of the open kind unknown on other fronts since the first days of the war. This held true of the front to the north and west of Coritza. Further eastward in the border mountains, the Monastir line found its beginning, and here the Zouaves were entrenched.

It was from this region our calls came. The main road from Serbia, now cut off by the line, rose some eight kilometers to the southeast of Coritza and, by a series of loops, zigzagged up from the valley below to a height of five thousand feet, at which altitude it entered into a pass. Midway along this pass a view, exceeded in beauty by nothing in Switzerland, opened out below, where the vividly blue waters of Lake Prespa stretched away from a barren shore to a daz-

zling snow-clad mountain range. It was as wild and lonesome a scene as nature presents. Undoubtedly ours was the first motor ever to enter this pass, and there, amidst the immensity of a scene which showed no traces of man's dominion, it looked strangely out of place.

There were not many calls, but when one did come in it meant biting work. One afternoon, I remember, we left Coritza in response to a call from a little village nestling up in the foothills to the eastward. Dusk was coming on and a nasty, chill wind, forerunner of the night's cold, was blowing steadily through the pass when we reached the narrow gut which formed the only approach to our objective. Here we shut off the motor and prospected our way. It led along the base of a hill and the mud was such as I have never seen on road or trail. At times, as we plodded, it gripped us so that our lumbermen's boots became imbedded and in an effort to extract them we would topple and then, in kangaroo posture, kick ourselves loose. It was apparent no car could be forced through this morass, and that the wounded would have to be brought out by hand. We found them on some rotting straw in a roofless stone court halfway up the mountain side and fully two kilometers from the nearest point to which the car could approach. There were three of them, all Anamites (Indo-Chinese) and all badly hit. They were the first wounded Anamites I had ever seen, for the yellow men are deemed unre-

"All the Comforts of Home" Are Not More Appreciated Than These Crude Eating Places

Mustard Gas Cases with Protecting Compresses Over the Eyes Are Awaiting the Ambulance

liable and are rarely sent into the line. These men, we were told, had been shot by their own officers when attempting a break after being sent into a charge.

Night had now shut down. It was deemed unsafe to show a light lest it draw the fire of the enemy's patrols. Thus a pitchy darkness added to our task. There were several *brancardiers* in attendance and we all now set to work to get our men to the car. None of that little group, neither the wounded nor those who bore them, will, I fancy, ever forget that night. For six hours we wallowed through that slough of despond, steaming and struggling till the cold sweat bathed our bodies, and every muscle and tendon cried out in weariness. Not a star helped out a blackness so deep that at one end of a stretcher I could not see my fellow bearer before me. How we made it we shall never know but somehow we came through and stowed the last *blessé* within the car. A wet, clinging snow had commenced to fall and to beat down into our faces as we drove. Once the car mired and we groaned with apprehension lest we be held till morning but we "rocked" it through. Once the lights—for we had now switched them on—showed us figures ahead in the road. We loosened our arms and stripped off our gloves the better to handle them, but passed the group without incident.

Sometime after two in the morning we glimpsed the red light which showed the field hospital. We knocked

the place up and commenced the unloading of our wounded. They were still alive, as the groans showed. The *médecins* urged us to stay the night, but the snow was coming down harder than ever, and afraid that morning might find us snowbound, we determined to push on at once. Coritza was something like thirty kilometers away down the valley, but we had no load now, and in spite of the roughness of the way it was less than ninety minutes later when we passed the sentry, drove the car into the compound, and climbed stiffly down.

But all nights were not like this. On the second floor of a building midway down a crooked street in the town was a cosy café, and here, when there were no calls, we spent the evening sipping Turkish coffee and smoking interminable cigarettes. The walls were draped with exotic hangings. On the floor were crudely woven rugs. A small, raised platform occupied one end of the room. Cross-legged upon this sat grave old Turks nodding meditatively over their hookahs. Scattered about were tables where foregathered many men of many tongues. All were armed and sat with their guns across their knees or handily leaning against the walls by their sides.

It was at the café we encountered the Zouave. A fascinatingly interesting chap he was. He had been everywhere, seen queer sights and made strange journeyings. He was a child of adventure. All over the world you meet them, in the dingy cabins of tramp

steamers, around balsam camp fires, in obscure cafés of the polyglot ports, beneath tropical palms, in the tea houses of the Far East, in compounds and *bomas* from Bankok to Bahama. And always their setting seems appropriate, as they tone into it. They are usually just coming from, or are just going to some place beyond. Of some things their knowledge is profound; of others, theirs is the innocence of children. They may be tall or short, old or young but usually they are lean, and about their eyes are tiny wrinkles which have come from much gazing over water or from the searing glare of the tropics. They are apt to be of little speech, but when they talk odd words from queer dialects slip out. They know the food terms in a half dozen languages and the fighting words in as many more. They have met cannibals and counts. They eat anything without complaint or praise. Nothing shocks them; nothing surprises them, but everything interests them. They are without definite plan in the larger scope of life but never without immediate purpose. For a good woman they have respect amounting to reverence. Without doctrinal religion, they live a creed which might shame many a churchman. Living and wandering beyond the land of their nativity, they love her with the true love of the expatriate and should she need them they would come half around the world to serve her. So the Zouave talked to us of Persia and Peru, of violent deaths he had seen, of ballistics and sharks and opium dens and oases, and

the while a sentry challenged without in the street "somewhere in Albania."

My orders, when leaving the Squad, had been to proceed to Coritza and remain there until relieved, the C. O. adding that this would probably be in five days. This time passed and twice five days, yet no word or relief came. The weather had been almost continuously bad with rain and snow, so that there seemed a probability that the pass was blocked and the stream swollen beyond the possibility of a crossing. Even the most unusual surroundings may become commonplace through forced association and Vive and I were beginning to tire of Coritza. We took turns in walking about the town; we worked on the machine till nothing remained to be done; we chatted with the soldiers; we read. Our library contained one book, *Dombey and Son.* As I was about half way through this, we cut the book in two, Vive reading the first part at the same time I was pushing through the latter half.

On the seventh of January the Albanians celebrated their Christmas and on the fourteenth, following the Greek calendar, New Year's. All the stores and bazaars were closed on these days, giving the streets a particularly desolate appearance. Some astounding costumes appeared, those of European descent being the most extraordinary, the fashion of a decade gone by suffering revival. Bands of urchins roved about and upon small provocation broke into what I suppose were

Yuletide carols, though it would indeed be a "merry gentleman" who could "rest" when under fire of such vocal shrapnel.

At last one gloomy evening, when January was half over, as we crouched over our charcoal brazier, we heard the hoot of a motor horn and knew that our relief had come. We tumbled out to find the Lieutenant with two of the fellows. It had been found impossible to get another ambulance across the mountains, but the C. O. had managed to pass his light touring car through with the relief drivers. My car was to remain in Albania until conditions in the pass improved in the spring, and Vive and I were to return with the C. O.

With the passing of the days, these plans materialized and soon Vive and I found ourselves referring in the past tense to the time spent in Albania. The return trip from Coritza was in reality the beginning of the end which was attained four months later. Ultimately Monastir, Salonika, the Island of Melos (where we put in to escape a submarine), Taranto, Rome, Paris and New York were cities along the trail which, in May, led to the magic place that men call "home."

CHAPTER XVII

"DOWN VALLEYS DREADLY DESOLATE"

WE started next morning *de bonne heure,* the C. O. assigning me the wheel. Transport had so kneaded the melting snow and mud that the way was little better than a bog. Frequently, indeed constantly after reaching the foothills, it was necessary for all hands save the helmsman, to go overside in order that the machine might be lightened. All day we stuck to it and the mud stuck to us and night found us still in the lower hills with several streams yet to cross. Once, in the darkness, we lost our way and had to cast about in the gloom for tracks. At last, long after dark, we glimpsed the flicker of camp fires and shortly hove to at the lonesome little mountain village of Zelovia.

Though it was sometime after evening mess, a friendly cook mended his fire and got us some food. Then we were glad to spread our blankets on the straw within one of the stone huts and drift off to sleep.

At daylight we roused out and commenced the ascent of the pass. With a heavy ambulance the way would have been impossible and even with the *voiture*

légère it was the next thing to it. The others walked —or rather plodded—and, at times, when the going was particularly bad, put their shoulders to the car and heaved. At the wheel, I struggled and threw gas into her until it seemed the engine must fly to pieces. But we kept at it without pause, save now and then to allow the radiator to cool, and at mid-day topped the divide. The descent, narrow and clogged as it was with packtrains and other transport, was a particularly nasty piece of navigation, but by mid-afternoon we were winding through the streets of Florina.

Fifteen kilometers south of Monastir, just where the Serbian-Macedonian line crosses, lie the war-festered remains of the village of Negocani. Here we found the Squad. By early January the cars had suffered so severely from shell fire in Monastir that the division commander had ordered the retirement of Section headquarters to this village beyond mid-calibre range.

It is not a cheerful place, Negocani. Situated in the center of a barren valley the snows and winds of winter and the suns and rains of summer sweep its dreary ruins. On either side, across the plain, the frowning, treeless Macedonian mountains look down upon it. Through its one crooked street five armies have fought and the toll of that fighting is everywhere. By the roadside, in the adjacent fields, in the very courtyards are the little wooden crosses, the aftermath of war's sowing. A third of the mud houses have

been levelled and those remaining are pocked with rifle fire or are gaping from shells. Trenches parallel the road and zig-zag across the fields. The débris of war litters the place, the very odor of war hangs ambient over it.

On the edge of the village stands a two-storied 'dobe building, its windows without glass, its walls marked with machine-gun fire. This, with its scattering of out buildings, was our billet, our *maison de campagne,* and the gods of war never frowned upon one more forlorn. The upper floor of the principal building was divided into two rooms by a hall. Ten men, packed like cartridges in a clip, were quartered in each of these rooms and four of us, "the hall-room boys," shared the space between. That hall, I am convinced—and so are the others who therein shivered—was the draughtiest place known to man. Over the glassless windows we hung *blessé* blankets, which were about as effective in shutting out the wind as the putting up of a "no admission" sign would have been. It was a great place for a fresh air crank, that hall, though he could never have held to his theories; they would have been blown out of his system. The snow sifted in and swirled about; overhead the roof leaked and from the open companionway, whence led the ladder to the ground below, rushed up the winds of the world. Giles, George, Tom, will you ever forget the "hall-room," that bone-searching cold, those shivery nights, the rousings out before the dawn, the

homecoming at night to wet blankets? Not while memory lasts, not "if the court knows itself!"

Below, the two rooms were used, one by the French *attachés* of the Section, the other for the sick—for there was always someone "down." Across a sort of courtyard, formed by flanking sheds, was a low mud cowhouse. In this we messed. To obtain sufficient light we were obliged to knock holes in the walls on all four sides and when it came to draughts this *salle à manger* was a close second to the hall-room. At the rear our field kitchen or "goulash battery," was drawn up and here the cook concocted his vicious parodies on food. There may have been worse cooks—there are some strange horrors in interior Thibet but I have never been there—but in the course of a somewhat diverse career I have never met the equal of our cook as a despoiler of food and meal after meal, day after day, week after week he served us macaroni boiled to the hue of a dead fish's belly, till we fairly gagged when it was set before us. Sometimes, by way of change, we had half-raw "dum-dums"—beans—but macaroni was never long "reported missing" and the Squad mathematician calculated that during the winter we consumed sufficient to thrice encircle the globe, with enough left over to hang the cook. We had "dog biscuits"—hardtack—too. There were two kinds—with and without worms. By toasting the former the latter was produced. Our greatest craving was for sweets, the French army ration substituting *vin ordinaire*.

We were seldom ever "filled" and hence was forced upon us the strictly acquired taste for *yogart,* or *kuss,* as the Albanians call it.

At first, as I have said elsewhere, the Squad scorned this dish but one by one we grew first to tolerate, then to accept and, finally to enjoy *yogart.* To see us humped up around our plank table eating the stuff and solemnly discussing the particular "brew," would have gladdened the heart of Metchnikoff. Daily we discovered new properties in *yogart.* It possesses the quality, found but rarely, of mixing well, and being improved by the introduction of other substances. Thus it is delicious with sugar, delectable with chocolate and ambrosial with jam, and we even discovered "Buster" adding macaroni to his portion, in explanation of which inexcusable *faux pas* he stated that "it made the dish go farther."

Food, or the lack of it, was not the only element which contributed to our discomfort; there was the cold. It was not merely the lowness of the temperature, though the thermometer frequently lingered around ten degrees below zero, Fahrenheit; it was the dampness which accompanied it, the snow and the never-ceasing, penetrating wind. Fuel was very scarce. Since history's dawn armies have marched and bivouacked in this land and its trees have gone to feed their camp-fires. So that now wood, save in the hills remote from the trails, does not exist. What little we did get was furnished indirectly by the enemy him-

self for when one of his shells demolished a house we salvaged the timbers thereof. As an aid to the cooking we had a little gasoline stove which, when it got under way, made a noise like a high-powered tractor. It possessed the pleasing habit of exploding from causes unknown and altogether was about as safe as a primed hand grenade. Indeed we had a theory that it was originally designed as some deadly engine of war, found too dangerous and relegated to its present use.

Though headquarters had been moved from Monastir, we continued to serve the same sector of line. Two cars remained constantly in the City on twenty-four hour service, subject to special call, and from four to eight, according to need, left one hour before daylight each morning to evacuate the Mosque dressing-station. Our loads were taken to the new field hospital, established at Negocani or, as before, to the evacuation hospital at Florina.

Our billet, as I have said, was on the edge of the village and so stood some two hundred yards from the main road, to reach which we wound in and out among some half destroyed houses. The constant passing and repassing of our cars so churned this *piste* that by the end of January it became impassable and we were forced to park our cars on a wind-swept flat by the roadside. This meant additional vexation, since we were obliged to transport by hand our gasoline from quarters, where it was stored, to the cars. As the days wore on, our courtyard and the

way to the cars became one great bog, a foot deep in mud, through which we sloshed about, breaking through the ice when it thawed and slipping about when it froze. Only in Manchuria have I seen such mud.

The dismal cold of these days, their grayness, the forlorn feeling that to the end of time we were doomed to slog our weary way down 'valleys dreadly desolate" I cannot hope to convey. Perhaps the entries in my journal may reflect "the atmosphere."

Thus: January 21st. "Snow fell during the night and continued throughout the day. Four of us put in the morning wrecking some half-demolished buildings, getting out the beams for fire wood and then spent the afternoon crouched around the blaze. I have never experienced such penetrating cold. In this windowless, doorless house with an icy wind searching one's very bones but one thought is possible, the cold, cold, cold. The mountains, seen through the swirling snow have taken on an added beauty, but this village, if anything, seems more desolate. At dusk, set out for Monastir where "Beebs" and I are now on twenty-four hour service, quartered at the old cantonment. As we entered the city, the road being clogged with transport, the enemy shelled. I thought they had "Beebs," but his luck held. Another salvo has just gone over, evidently for the crossroads."

And on the 23rd: "A piercing cold day. Tried to write a letter this afternoon but gave it up as my

fingers were too numb to hold the pen. Worked on my car this morning. Meals unusually awful—that horrible wine-meat stew, of course macaroni. Have blanketed the windows. Possibly we can now sleep without holding on to the covers. The roof still leaks, but of course one can't expect all the luxuries."

The following day was "Cold and overcast with a biting wind. Up and in Monastir before daylight, evacuating three bad cases to Florina. Made a find in a newly shelled house in Monastir, a window with three unbroken panes. Have installed it at the head of my bed. It ought to help. For the last three nights, in spite of all my blankets I have been unable to sleep for the cold. Today we saw the sun for the first time in two weeks. The impossible has been attained; our courtyard is even deeper in mud. Service never wrote truer words than :

"It isn't the foe we fear;
It isn't the bullets that whine;
It isn't the business career
Of a shell, or the bust of a mine;
It isn't the snipers who seek
To nip our young hopes in the bud;
No, it isn't the guns,
And it isn't the Huns—
It's the Mud, Mud, Mud."

Our costumes these days were more practical than

pretty. Beneath our tunics we wore woolen underwear and sweaters, and over them sheepskin coats. On our feet, felt lumberman's boots over which were drawn rubber half-boots. Our heads and faces were covered with woven helmets on top of which we wore fatigue caps, or, when under fire, steel helmets. Our hands were encased in wool gloves with driving gauntlets pulled over. Altogether we were about as bulky as a Russian *isvozatik*.

Towards the end of January we took over another segment of the line, a section southeast of Monastir, collecting our *blessés* from a village called Scleveka, situated on the banks of the Tcherna, some twenty-five kilometers from Negocani. Scleveka was the highest point reached by wheeled transport, though some fifteen kilometers back from the line. From here munitions and *ravitaillement* were carried into the mountains on mule back, the wounded coming out by the same torturing transport. A few kilometers before reaching Scleveka we passed through the town of Brode, the first Serbian town re-taken by the Allies after the great retreat of 1915, the point at which the Serbs first re-entered their country. Here the Tcherna was crossed by two bridges. Through the pass beyond poured French, Serbs and Italians to reach their alloted segment of line. The congestion and babble at this point was terific.

We saw much of the Italians. Long lines of their troops were constantly marching forward, little men

with ill-formed packs. As soldiers they did not impress us, but they had a splendid motor transport, big, powerful cars well adapted to the Balkan mud and handled by the most reckless and skilful drivers in the Allied armies. The men were a vivacious lot and often sang as they marched.

In marked contrast were the Serbs, "the poor relation of the Allies." For the most part they were middle-aged men, clad in non-descript uniforms and with varied equipment. They slogged by silently—almost mournfully. I never saw one laugh and they smiled but rarely. They were unobtrusive, almost unnoticed, yet when a car was mired, they were always the first to help and withal they were invested with a quiet dignity which seemed to set them apart. I never talked with a soldier of any army who had seen them in action, but who praised their prowess.

The going, or rather ploughing, beyond Brode was particularly atrocious and it frequently took from two and a half to three hours to cover the fifteen kilometers. At one point the way was divided by two lonely graves which lay squarely in the middle of the road, the traffic of war passing and repassing on either side. Brode service was particularly uninteresting as the point at which we collected our *blessés* was too far back of the line to offer the excitement afforded by being under fire, save when there was an air raid. Then too the roads were so congested and in such terrible condition that the driving was of the most try-

ing sort and it frequently meant all day evacuation without one hot meal. Our work at this time was particularly heavy; we were serving three divisions, the one back of Monastir, the Brode division, and the division in Albania. In short we were covering the work of three motor Sections. My journal reflects our life:

February 6th: "Our hopes of spring and bright weather shattered. This has been one of those dismal, iron days which emphasize the grimness of war. Evacuated from Necogani to Florina. The rumor persists that America has declared war against Germany. If this be so we have a time of trial ahead. War as a theory is a magnificent, spectacular adventure—playing bands, dashing horses, flying colors; as a reality it is a gray, soul-wearying business, a business of killing and being killed, a business from which there can be no turning back and the learning of which will mean much agony for America.

February 7th: "A hard day. Up before four, slopping through the mire to the cars. Heavy rain, so I got quite well wet. In Monastir before daylight. An enormous shell hole—must be 210—near the bridge, made since I crossed last. Rain ceased by noon and I worked till night on my gear case.

February 8th: "Temperature fell during night. In snow, driven by biting northeast wind, I worked on my car throughout the morning and till two this afternoon. By this time I was numb with cold. Unable to use

gloves in handling tools with the result have frozen two fingers of my left hand. Tonight the snow is coming down harder than ever though wind has abated somewhat. It promises to be our coldest night. The water bottle at the head of my flea-bag has frozen solid.

February 9th: "Up at four-thirty to greet the coldest day of the winter. Had great difficulty in breaking the ice in the creek to get water for my radiator. In the still, driving snow to Monastir. Evacuated to Scleveka. From there to Brode, evacuating again to Scleveka, then two more round trips, reaching quarters at four this afternoon, where I got my first hot food of the day.

February 12th: "It's a cold, snowy night with a wind whistling through every crack of this shelterless shelter. Occasionally a patch of snow flops down on the pup tent I have rigged over my bed, but I am fairly snug in my bag. Left Monastir this morning at 6:30, having been on service there all night and evacuated to S——. On the return trip my engine refused duty. Finally diagnosed the trouble as a short circuit in the main contact. On removing the point, a matter of considerable difficulty, as I had only a large-sized screwdriver, found a small fragment of wire. I was unable to fish it out and it dropped back into the gear case. However, the short circuit was broken, for the moment—and I got the engine started. As I reached the triangle at the entrance to the City the wiring again short circuited and the engine died. It was now day-

light and here I was, stuck in the most bombarded spot in all Monastir, in plain view of the enemy glasses. For an hour I worked—and such an hour. I could feel the eyes of every man in the enemy forces fastened upon me. At last I succeeded in removing the bit of wire and praise be to Allah—not a shell came in during this time.

February 13th: "I got in at the end of a perfect day at 1:30 A. M., having experienced the usual delay at the Greek hospital, then getting lost in the pitchy blackness of Monastir's streets, finally crawling for five kilometers at a snail's pace through an incoming division of troops to reach a point where it was safe to turn on the lights. The run to Florina was a torture as my load were all badly hit and the road is so terrible that it's almost impossible to prevent the wrenching of the *blessés*. Returning found Fico *en panne* with a loaded car, so we transferred the wounded and I again evacuated to Florina. Then the weary grind back to quarters."

During all these days the enemy continued to rain his fire upon Monastir. Gradually but none the less surely the city was withering away. Here a house, there a shop or bazaar became a mass of débris. Huge holes gaped in the streets; tangled wire swung mournfully in the wind; once I saw a minaret fairly struck, totter a second and then pitch into the street, transferred in a twinkling from a graceful spire into a heap of brick and mortar, overhung by a shroud of dust.

Though perhaps half of the city's forty thousand inhabitants had fled as best they might, as many more remained. Generally they stayed indoors, though the flimsy walls offered little protection and there were no cellars. When they emerged, it was to slink along in the shadows of the walls. Scuttling, rather than walking, they made their way, every sense tensed in anticipation of the coming of "the death that screams." If Verdun had seemed the City of the Dead, Monastir was the Place of Souls Condemned to Wander in the Twilight of Purgatory. The fate of the *population civile* was a pitiable one. In a world of war, they had no status. Food, save the farina issued by the military, was unobtainable and fuel equally wanting. Scores were killed. As for the wounded, their situation was terrible. Drugs were too precious, bandages too valuable and surgeons' time too well occupied for their treatment. Their case would have been without hope had it not been for a neutral non-military organization of the Dutch which maintained in Monastir a small hospital for the treatment of civilians. This hospital established in a school did splendid work and its staff are entitled to high praise and credit.

"Their's was not the shifting glamour
Where fortune's favorites bask,
Their's but the patient doing
Of a hard, unlovely task."

From this hospital, one morning, I got the strangest load my ambulance ever carried—four little girls. As I lifted their stretchers into the car, their weights seemed as nothing. Three were *couchés,* the fourth, a bright little thing, wounded in the head by H. E. *éclat,* sat by my side on the driving seat and chatted with me in quaint French all the way to the hospital.

This was the last load I was to carry for many a day. It was the 16th of February. Since the 13th I had been unable to keep any food down, but had managed to stay at the wheel. Now on reaching Quarters I found myself too weak and dizzy to stand. The weeks and days which followed were weary ones. "Enteric fever and jaundice" the doctor pronounced it, limiting me to a milk diet. As there was no milk, matters were further simplified. It was too cold to hold a book and read, even had I been able to do so, thus day after day I lay on my back watching the snow sift through the cracks and listening to the rumble of the guns. February passed and March came in with terrible weather and still I was unable to struggle out of my bag. The doctor became keen on evacuating me to Florina and from there to Salonika, from whence I would be carried to France on a hospital ship. But I had seen enough of field hospitals to give me a horror of them, besides which I could not bear the thought of leaving the front in this ignominious fashion and before the end of my enlistment. So I begged for a respite. The Squad was very kind and

gave me every care their limited time and our surroundings permitted.

Meanwhile the days grew perceptibly longer and the sun, when it appeared, had a feeble warmth. A new Section coming out from France relieved our cars in Albania and Giles and the others coming back from Coritza reported that the city was under frequent plane bombardment and the population demoralized.

For some time the talk of an attack on Hill 1248 and the line back of Monastir had been growing. There seemed little doubt now that such an attack would shortly be launched with the object of driving the enemy back and freeing the city from artillery fire. Daily our fire grew more intense and, at times, lying in my bag, I could hear it reach the density of drum-fire. The fellows coming in reported the roads as congested with up-coming troops and new batteries going into position. Word came in that the Section was to hold itself in readiness to shift quarters to Monastir. Then, at last one night came the order that on the following day the Squad would report for action in the city.

CHAPTER XVIII

"THE WILD DISHARMONY OF DAYS"

FOR several days I had been up and I have seldom felt keener disappointment than when, at dusk, I watched the cars roll out at five minute intervals, headed for Monastir and action, and realized that I was not to be one of them. The doctor had absolutely forbidden my handling a wheel as yet, save for very short periods and I was to remain at Negocani with two of the mechanicians, Vincent, the second cook, and Le Beau, the *chef de bureau*. Lieutenant De Rode with that thoughtful tact which characterized him as a man and made him the most beloved of commanders, endeavored to console me by saying I would be of much use by remaining at Negocani, subject to call with the rescue car. But this did not prevent a realization that I was not sharing to the full the risk and work of the Squad. However, I had been in the army long enough to acquire its philosophy and to down my disappointment with *"c'est la guerre."*

And the days which ensued were not without their compensations. Vincent proved an excellent cook and a sympathetic nurse and all the Frenchmen *bons camarades*. The weather had grown markedly milder

and I was able to walk about a bit. Not far from quarters the French had built a huge wire pen, capable of containing a thousand men and as the attack pressed forward, this began to fill with prisoners. I used to walk over to the corral and watch its bedraggled tenants come in. Mostly they were Bulgars but there were also some Germans, Austrians and Turks.

It was on the 16th of March—exactly one month since I had left the wheel—that I again climbed into the driving seat for a run up for *ravitaillement* some six kilometers from Monastir. From this point a splendid view could be had of our curtain fire as it burst on the slope of Hill 1248. Our own division, the —Colonials, had not as yet I learned, attacked but were awaiting the consolidation of the newly won positions. The general opinion, I gleaned, was that the attack was not marching any too well.

On the following days I responded with the "rescue car" to several calls of distress and on the 19th, just a week after the Squad had gone up, I got permission to join them in Monastir.

It was four o'clock in the afternoon when I left Negocani. Passing the corral, I noticed that since morning the number of prisoners had been augmented and that now there must be close to a thousand within the enclosure. About five kilometers outside the city, I began to encounter a stream of wounded—head and arm cases—plodding along the roads, the bloody back-

wash of the attack. Evidently the volume of wounded was so heavy that the ambulances were all needed to transport the more serious cases. The noise of the guns had now grown very loud. Back of the city Hill 1248 reared its barren slopes. All along its crest shells from our batteries were breaking. It seemed impossible that anything could endure in that zone and yet even then the enemy crouched there awaiting the onslaught of our division. Below, the spires of the minarets reared their graceful forms and caught the rose-hue of the setting sun, but no *muezzin* appeared on their escarpments to summon the faithful to prayer. The narrow, stone bridge a half mile from the city's entrance showed it had been the object of the renewed interest of the enemy. Scores of shell holes flanked it but as yet it remained intact. From here on, the way was scattered with the freshly-killed carcasses of horses. Newly posted batteries marked the entrance to the city and as I entered a salvo banged out like the slam of hell's door.

The Squad had been literally shelled out of the old cantonment and had moved to another, my directions for finding which were rather vague. I had simply been told to go up the main street to a point where a building had been blown into it and turn to the left. But as buildings had everywhere been blown into the street, this availed me little, save as indicating the general quarter. It was now dusk, I was anxious to locate the cantonment before darkness fell, as of course

lights were strictly forbidden. Cruising about through the southwest portion of the town, I glimpsed one of our cars as it vanished around a corner. Proceeding in the direction from which it had come, I presently came on a large, windowless stone building in the doorway of which stood one of the fellows. The building proved to be the new cantonment, formerly some sort of a school. As billets go, it was very good, one of the few solidly constructed buildings in Monastir.

As soon as I entered the Chief handed me a gas mask and warned me to keep it slung. The night before the enemy had, for the first time, shelled with gas. As a result, 344 *civils* had been killed and some few soldiers. Dead horses, dogs and the few remaining fowls now lay about the streets, suffocated by the deadly chlorine. Those of the Squad who had been in quarters, had experienced a very close thing of it. A number of shells had struck around the building—two actually hitting it. Several of the men had been nearly overcome before they were awakened and their masks fixed. As evidencing the luck with which the Squad was "shot," one shell—a H. E.—had entered the building and exploding inside, had wrecked things generally, tearing several beds to shreds. It so happened that the men quartered in this room were out on duty at the time.

The Chief informed me that, for the present, he would only call on me in case of a "general alarm," for which I was very glad, since I was still feeling a

bit crumpled. So I sought out a corner where two walls intervened between me and the enemy's line of fire and spread my bag. The shells were crashing in rather steadily—from two to six thousand now fell in the city in each twenty-four hours—but, though our guns to the number of two or three hundred were adding their din, I slid off to sleep.

Our division had now "gone in"; there was no lack of work for the Section. Heretofore our orders had always been to move our cars only during the hours of darkness, lest they draw the enemy's fire. Now, on account of the volume of wounded, it was necessary to disregard this caution and we "rolled" continuously throughout the twenty-four hours.

It is not possible to convey an idea of the horror of Monastir during this period. The panic-stricken population fleeing the city, the burning houses—for the enemy had added incendiary shells to his répertoire of frightfulness—the rotting carcasses of the gassed animals, the field dressing-stations with their blackened, bloody occupants, the débris-littered streets and shattered houses, the air itself, bearing the breath of death, these gave to Monastir an awfulness that cannot be expressed in words. Another horror was added late in the afternoon of the 20th when the enemy's planes flew over the city dropping a salvo of bombs. The fire of our anti-aircraft guns did not seem to have the slightest effect and the flying crosses circled

their leisurely way about before turning southward back of our lines.

This same afternoon we received word that our division was being withdrawn from the lines and that consequently Squad headquarters would be moved back to Negocani. Immediately after evening mess, I secured a load from the dressing-station and started back for Florina. As I left the town, the enemy planes were coming back and our guns were again opening on them. A little farther along I came upon their work. The road at this point—just out of range of the enemy artillery—was lined on either side with *ravitaillement dépôts,* large tents, where the stores were sheltered, and scores of smaller tents occupied by *les tringlots.* Here the aircraft, hovering low, had dropped some forty bombs but a few moments before I reached the scene. A dozen or more torn corpses were scattered about and surgeons were hard at work over the wounded, of which there were several score. Mangled horses were lying about and great pools of blood reflected the last light of the day. Fresh earth flared away from the bomb holes and the excited hum of men's voices rose in the evening air. My car was already full so there was little I could do, save carry a doctor a little way down the road from one group of wounded to another.

This air raid was the first of many with which the enemy harassed our lines of communication and *dépôts.* They penetrated as far as forty kilometers

back of the line, driving our transport camps from the open plain to the shelter of the mountains. At this time our own air service seemed inferior to that of the enemy, both in personnel and in machines, and offered us little protection. The anti-aircraft guns, especially those mobile ones mounted on high-power motors served best for though they rarely made a hit, they did keep the crosses at a height of six or seven thousand feet and prevented their bombing with any great accuracy.

Normal fighting was now resumed; the attack had failed and a period of comparative quiet set in. While the enemy had at several points been forced back a kilometer or more, the chief object of the offensive—the freeing of Monastir from artillery fire—had not been achieved and the commanding mountains back of the city still remained in his hands. Hill 1248 had changed hands no less than seven times and the losses on both sides in prisoners and dead were heavy. So far as we were concerned, the net result was the taking of some two thousand prisoners, mostly Bulgars, though with a sprinkling of Austrians and Germans. Much of the artillery brought up for the attack was now withdrawn, preparatory to shifting to another front in support of the British, who were shortly to launch an attack.

As March waned the snow, leaving the plains, receded slowly up the mountain sides; the few shrubs put forth their leaves, doing their puny best to relieve

the barren grayness of the landscape; millions of frogs tuned up their batrachian banjos; back of the line the peasants drove their caribaos, pulling the crude wooden-shafted ploughs; mosquitoes and flies began to appear; quinine and pith helmets were issued; at night we no longer drained our radiators to prevent freezing—in short, spring had come to the Balkans.

With the coming of spring and the drying of the mud, walking became popular with us. Scattered about the valley and nestled in the foothills were numerous villages which were made objectives. Perhaps the most interesting was Kenali, lying about four kilometers across the valley southeast of Negocani. Here it was that the Bulgars made their last stand before falling back on Monastir and where on November 14th the decisive battle of Kenali was fought. The story of that battle was seared into the earth, as plain to read as though written in print. The enemy had entrenched on a triangular salient which rose some eight or ten feet above the dead level of the valley floor. From this elevation he could rake the approaches with machine gun fire. But it was not rapid-firers that won the battle; it was the French artillery which, concentrating on that salient, had swept the ground with such deadly accuracy that the terrain before the elevation showed scarcely a mark of fire, while the trenches had been wiped out of existence and the earth for scores of yards rearward had been tossed about as though by subterranean ebullition. Half-

buried in the harried soil lay the rotting bodies of men. Here a leg, there an arm protruded. On some the flesh was intact; others had been picked clean by the carrion birds and where a head appeared the eyes had been plucked out. Not a green thing, not a leaf or blade of grass grew within the cursed area. It was as though some blight had descended and, wiping out all life, had poisoned the earth itself.

On the opposite side of the valley, crowning the lower hills, were a number of quaint old monasteries. There also we made pilgrimage. They, too, had suffered from the scourge of war. Half-wrecked, despoiled of their hangings, deserted by the monks, they stood desolate, looking out over the valley and the distant passing of war's panorama. Sometimes we trudged over to Florina, hopping a *camion en route*. The town had taken on added activity. The refugees, who daily poured out of stricken Monastir in a pitiful stream, flowed into Florina and filled its queer streets. Business took on unwonted activity and the coffee-houses and *yogart* shops were crowded, so that frequently when we went into "John's" place he informed us, "*Yogart,* no got."

With the coming of spring, the location of the Squad in the low-lying ground of Negocani became unhealthful. Fever, the bone-shaking Balkan type, was prevalent and the need became imperative to seek the hills. Such a move was made the more desirable because of the increasing activity of the enemy planes.

Brode service had now been abandoned and there was no longer need of remaining at a mid-way point; we could move nearer to Monastir. The C. O., ever careful of the health of his command, began to cast about for a spot which would combine a high altitude with accessibility. On the 11th of April it was announced that on the following day we would leave Negocani.

CHAPTER XIX

THE CLUTCH IS THROWN OUT

JUST where the long, barren valley at the head of which stands Monastir narrows down, where the jutting foot-hills encroaching on the plain form a series of ravines, we pitched our camp. A single spur intervened between us and the city, which, as the plane flies, was three kilometers away. To reach the camp, we left the main road by an ascent at first gradual but becoming rapidly steeper, and wound up from the plain into the hills a distance of two kilometers or more. At a height of, perhaps, five hundred feet, the ravine through which the way led flattened out into a small park-like pocket, along one side of which roared a mountain torrent. Here our cars were parked. Here, too, was established the mess tent, the stores tent and the *atelier*. On both sides the hills rose sharply and beyond, the mountains. On the crest of the hills, a hundred feet above the cars and mess tent, we pitched several large "snoring-tents."

The sides of this hill were scarred with earth platforms, formed by digging into the sides of the hill. These had originally been constructed and used by

Bulgar and German soldiers, who had been forced to abandon them when the French advanced on Monastir By erecting a ridge pole on two supporting poles, covering this frame with two pup tents and stretching the whole over one of these excavations, a very snug "wickyup" was formed. A number of us preferred this style of residence to a tent and the "Aztec Colony" formed no mean proportion of the Squad roster.

Giles and I were the joint proprietors of one of these cliff dwellings. Its inner and end walls were formed by the hillside, its other two walls by earth and stone removed in excavating. When the wind blew, the canvas roof had a disconcerting way of billowing out like a captive Zeppelin. When it rained, sociable little streams of water strolled unobtrusively in and spread themselves over the mud floor. Between times the walls fell in on us. Altogether that "wickyup" required about as much attention as a colicky baby and nearly wore us out with its demands. But the view offered from its V-like door compensated for much. Lying stretched out on our blankets, we could look out on a scene than which I have seldom seen one more beautiful. Below, the valley floor spread out to the mountains on the farther side. The play of light and shade over its surface gave a constant change of aspect. There were many strata of colors, blue, brown, pink, green, gray and then the crowning white of the mountains. Now and then a haze would settle down and fill the valley, so that we seemed to be gazing

out on some great lake. Then the mist would rise and again we could discern the toy villages scattered about or perhaps make out some puny, crawling transport, overhung with a yellow dust-cloud, wending its laborious way. Again a storm would sweep along, away down there below us, blotting out the sunshine in its progress and leaving a glistening trail. Off in the distance, it all seemed very peaceful and war very far away, save for the muttering of the guns, which, indeed, might have been thunder. But then suddenly nearby guns, the anti-aircraft batteries might go into action. In the sky planes haloed with bursting shrapnel puffs, darted and dodged while, beneath, scurrying mites of men ran crazily about and clouds of smoke and dust showed where bombs were bursting. At night the picture changed. It took on the added mystery of obscurity. The stars sent down a silvery glow. Sometimes a light flashed weirdly in the immense gloom and now and then the darkness was ripped apart by the searing flare of a rocket and the quiet, which had descended with the going down of the sun, would be pierced with the crackle of machine gun fire or shattered, perhaps, with artillery.

From the next ridge beyond ours, we could look down upon Monastir and the enemy. In turn we were in his view and range. Beyond we could see plainly the road to Prelip, down which came his transport, commanded by our fire.

We had moved into the hills to escape the heat of

the plains, believing winter to be over. We had barely become established before an unceasing, freezing wind set in from the mountains. A *vardar*, it is called. It carried with it small particles of sand and grit which penetrated every crack and crevice, filled our eyes, impregnated the food and generally made life miserable. Our "wickyup" suffered severely and many times, day and night, we were forced to go aloft and mend sail as the roof threatened to fetch loose and leave for parts unknown. The *vardar* blew itself out in three days and we had just begun to believe that perhaps, after all, life was worth living, when the glass fell and a wet, clinging snow set in. It was hard to determine just what season was being observed. At no time in the winter had we suffered more than we did in the next few days. On leaving Negocani, with gypsy-like improvidence, we had abandoned our sheep-skins and woolens, so the cold caught us entirely unprepared. The snow continued intermittently for three days. When not on duty, we lay in our bags, as the only method of keeping reasonably warm. We spent the time in sleeping and in talking of *les meilleurs fois*, of wonderful meals we had eaten and of still more wonderful ones we should have if we ever saw Paris again.

I had seen considerable of Monastir service during April and on the night of the 29th it again fell to my lot to go on duty there. With Giles I left camp at eight o'clock. The snow, at the time, was beating

down in such masses that all objects were obscured and we drove simply by "feel." Only our perfect familiarity with Monastir's streets enabled us to make our way through the city.

For some time, since the attack, in fact, we had been securing our *blessés* from beyond the city, from the line itself. The place was known as *La Grande Roche,* from a huge boulder which rose beside a ravine at this point. This *poste* could only be approached at night, as the enemy was very near and half encircled it, his line bending back on either flank. To reach *La Grande Roche* it was necessary to traverse the city, ascend a slight hill, along which batteries were posted, cross a small stream by a bridge which we ourselves constructed, then proceed across a wide open space to a point from whence led a mule road. From here the way wound through a fringe of woods, finally crossing a narrow, shell-damaged viaduct down to the Rock.

No man of the Squad ever saw this route, save by the light of the moon or the stars, for it was swept by the enemy's machine guns and to attempt a passage in daylight would have meant certain death. On this night—the darkest, I think I ever drove—it was impossible to see the hood of the car before one. The streets were so mapped on our minds that we did not need to see to make our way through them, but on this route it was impossible to cross the wide open space and find the exit road on the other side. In

order, therefore, to proceed, we found it necessary for one man to walk immediately in front of the car, his back against the radiator, calling directions to the man at the wheel. As Giles' car was not behaving well, I drove mine while he acted as my eyes. Even with this arrangement, it was often necessary for us to halt, while we both cast about in the intense darkness for the way. It was desperate, tense work for occasionally a flare-bomb would go up and leave us in a sphere of light feeling as conspicuous as an actor who has forgotten his lines. Three torturing trips we made that night. Twice when we were near the "Great Rock," shrapnel screamed overhead and burst a little beyond us in the ravine. Once we lurched fairly into a shell hole. Fortunately it was on our outward trip and we had no wounded on board, so we were able to get the car out.

Somehow the night passed—one of the longest I ever experienced—and the gray,snowy dawn appeared. With our loads we drew out of the *ambulance* yard, passed down the Street of the River, crossed the dilapidated wooden bridge and wound through the shattered, deserted bazaars out upon the main street and then—though I did not know it—I passed out of Monastir for the last time.

The period of our enlistment with the Army of the Orient was nearing its end. The news that America had entered the war had now been definitely confirmed. Some of the Squad—about half believing that

they could do greater service to the cause by continuing with the French, were re-enlisting. Others of us were anxious to get to France or the States at the earliest moment, some to enter French aviation, others to join our own army. Finally the 23rd of April, the last day of enlistment arrived. Yet no men had reached us to take our places so we continued to serve as before. The date was notable only that it brought us our last snow.

Since leaving the valley, we had experienced a sense of security which our position there, exposed to the fire from hostile planes, had not permitted. But this feeling was rudely shattered on the morning of the 24th. It was a fine, clear morning, the first for many days. The men were scattered about the camp, working on their cars, in the sleeping tents or the "wicky-up." Over by Monastir the anti-aircraft guns were banging away at some planes, a procedure which had long ceased to hold any interest. As the "crosses" passed out of range, quiet settled down. Then we became aware of the hum of propellers overhead. Scarcely a man looked up—taking for granted that the noise was of our own planes. Suddenly without warning there was a sickening swish terminating in an explosion and the camp stampeded into action. Before a man could reach the cover of the overhanging rocks two more bombs swished down. The *éclat* spun spitefully through the air and whanged into the hillside. The planes passed on, followed by the fire

of our guns. For a while we lay flat against the rocks and then cautiously issued from our holes. One of the bombs had struck near the cars, the others just across the ravine. A Frenchman had been hit by glancing *éclat:* that was all. The Squad's luck had held. A fraction of a second's difference in the release of the bombs and—but why speculate?

Three days later a courier coming into camp brought the word that six men of the relieving Squad were in Salonika. This meant that six of us could leave that very night. So we drew lots to determine the six. My slip bore a cross. I was to leave.

For the last time the Squad sat down to mess. We knew that in all probability we should never all mess together again—as I write these lines, already two of the Squad have paid their highest toll—but sentiment or heroics are the last emotions that could find place in the Squad, so the last mess was much like many others. Six times "For he's a jolly good fellow" rose; there were six rounds of cheers—and the last mess was over.

There was a deal of hand shaking and back-pounding, more cheering and we rolled out, the six of us, in two of the ambulances. Just beyond where the camp road joined the main road we passed out of range of the enemy's guns.

Darkness had fallen when we reached Florina Station. A dumpy little engine, to which was attached a long line of freight cars, wheezed impatiently at the

platform. There was but time to heave our dunnage into an empty box car and swing on ourselves, and the train bumped out. Throughout the night we lurched and rattled about, getting but fitful naps in our bags.

At noon the next day we reached Salonika. It was a case of *rus in urbe.* To us after months of grime and grind at the front, the city seemed magnificent. It was Saturday and that afternoon the band played, in the *place.* None of us, I fancy, will ever forget the thrill of pride which ran through us as we stood at salute that afternoon and heard there in that exotic setting for the first time during the war, the wonderful strains of the Star Spangled Banner.

For three days we remained in Salonika, dividing the time between taking hot baths and eating sticky Turkish pastry. The morning of the fourth saw us on the quay, preparatory to going aboard the transport.

It was on the quay we encountered the Commandant. Someone of the Squad in Albania had done him a favor and he was not the man to forget it. It was his kindness and consideration that was to make our voyage on the transport not only endurable but enjoyable. He was a Chasseur d'Afrique, a splendid type of the French professional soldier. His face was keen and aggressive, with an eye which glinted like a bayonet and a mouth that in anger could thin to a sword edge, yet I have never seen a man of greater courtesy. Across his breast stretched the ribbons of

seven decorations. His favorite gesture was a sudden advancing of his clenched right hand as though raising a sword in charge, and when he assured us that if there was anything we wanted, we were to tell him, and he would see that it was done *"avec impressment,"* we felt that indeed that thing would be done *"avec impressment."* We shall long remember the Commandant.

Our transport, *Le Duc d'Aumale,* steamed out of the harbor with two others, convoyed by three destroyers, a cruiser and a dirigible. During the night we were wirelessed the approach of two enemy submersibles. Under forced draught, we made for the emergency harbor of ——, where we glided safely in behind the torpedo net. Here we found a score of ships, transports, freighters and their fighting convoys. We lay in this little harbor for three days, putting in the time pleasantly enough, sailing, swimming and burro-riding ashore. Late in the afternoon of the third day, with our convoy in line of battle, we steamed forth.

Two days later we entered the harbor of ——, in Italy. That same night we entrained and the following day reached Rome, where we broke our journey for forty-eight hours. At Turin we again stopped over and finally, just a fortnight after leaving camp in Serbia, we reached Paris and reported to Army Headquarters for discharge.

* * * *

The captain looked up from the papers. "So, *monsieur,* you have served as a volunteer for eighteen months. It is long; two service stripes mean more than days—they mean a lifetime. I congratuate you, and for France, I thank you." My hand snaps up in salute—my last salute, for the clutch is thrown out.

THE END.

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